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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

WELFARE IN ALBERTA, 1905-1936

by

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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled WELFARE IN ALBERTA, 1905-1936. Submitted by David Edgar Lysne in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.





## ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the response of government to various welfare needs in Alberta from 1905 to 1936. When Alberta was formed a province in 1905, the government inherited no system of child welfare, or any organized form of public assistance from the former North-West Territories government.

Under the terms of the British North America Act, and its subsequent interpretation, welfare matters were considered the function of the various provinces. The B. N. A. Act, however, did not specify the means by which the provinces were to discharge these functions, or the degree of authority the provinces should exercise in this regard.

Alberta's first provincial government assumed certain responsibilities, but placed the majority of welfare functions at local and municipal levels. The Liberal government encouraged the formation of volunteer and private welfare organizations, which, in conjunction with the municipalities, provided the basis for most welfare operations in the province.

There was no great demand for increased government participation in welfare until the first world war. Then, with many husbands and fathers killed overseas, and the loss of hundreds of providers in the influenza epidemic of



1918, the Liberal government passed the Mother's Allowance Act of 1919. The Mother's Allowance, however, was superimposed upon a highly decentralized welfare system, and did not signal any new trend in the development of welfare in Alberta.

The election of the United Farmers of Alberta government in 1921 brought no basic change to Alberta's welfare structure. There were, however, strong demands for the United Farmers of Alberta government to increase its role in welfare activities. The Labour members in the legislature were the chief leaders of this movement, although various groups in the province voiced similar demands. Throughout the 1920's, the United Farmers of Alberta government contended that welfare services in Alberta were adequate. Even when the federal government passed the Old Age Pensions Act of 1927, the United Farmers of Alberta did not pass legislation to make it operative in Alberta until 1929.

Not until the great depression arrived did the United Farmers of Alberta seriously consider any basic revision of Alberta's welfare structure. In 1933, the Farmer's government ordered a Royal Commission to examine the nature of provincial-municipal relations. The results of the Commission survived the United Farmers of Alberta's defeat in the 1935 election. In the 1936 session, the Social Credit government, in response to the recommendations of the Commission, established the Bureau of Relief and Public Welfare, which represented a formal acknowledgment of the increased role that the province would assume in securing the welfare of its people.





## FOREWORD

The study of the period from 1905 to 1936 has been undertaken to provide background knowledge as to how the Department of Public Welfare has evolved into a major department of the government of Alberta. While there are many books on this period of Alberta's history, little has been written about the organized attempts of Albertans to meet the misfortunes and hardships they experienced.

Although local and volunteer organizations formed an integral part of Alberta's welfare scene, especially before the 1930's, this work is principally concerned with the role of the provincial government in welfare activities.

This enquiry has been handicapped by the lack of a complete set of government documents. From 1909 to 1920, the Alberta Sessional Papers contain much information on child welfare, but scant records remain on the subject from 1920 until 1936. Other government documents on welfare are scarce throughout the period under consideration.

As the province of Alberta had no Hansard during these years, the only sources to present the legislative debates are newspaper accounts of the various sessions. While these reports have been used extensively, many of the debates are not represented in full, thus much of the intrinsic worth of various speeches has been lost to posterity.





The concept of public welfare is used throughout this study and is defined as "social programs designed to transfer income, in cash, in kind, or in the form of services to those whose capacity for self-support has been impaired, interrupted, or (in the case of children), has not reached maturity."<sup>1</sup> This concept of welfare is basically a mid-twentieth century one, and has only gained practical application in Canada since the publication in 1943 of the Report on Social Security,<sup>2</sup> under the directorship of Charles Marsh. Nevertheless, the conceptual basis provides an effective framework within which to analyze the period in question.

Terms such as "wards of the government" and "dependency needs" which are peculiar to the field of welfare, have been kept to a minimum, but have been used where no other term seems suitable.

Certain factors such as health provisions and labour developments are omitted from direct discussion. They are outside the scope of this work and form the basis of a study in their own right. These factors, however, will be mentioned wherever they shed light upon the central purpose of this work.

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<sup>1</sup>Margaret S. Gordon, Economics of Welfare Policies, (New York, 1963), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Leonard Marsh, Report on Social Security for Canada, prepared for the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, (Ottawa, 1943).



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## CHAPTER I

### THE SETTING

An observable feature at the time Alberta was formed a province of the Dominion in 1905 was its obvious lack of formal welfare services. This can be readily understood if the history preceding the formation of the province is taken into consideration. Since Alberta was created from the western portion of the old North-West Territories, a brief examination of the latter's history should be undertaken.

The acquisition of Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories by the Canadian government in 1870<sup>1</sup> ushered in a new era for that part of the North American continent which had chiefly been controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company for fur trading purposes.

Except for the Selkirk Settlement, established in the valley of the Red River in 1812, the fur trader had held undisputed sway in this region. As late as 1870, all but a handful of its scanty population were half-breeds. Settlement throughout the North-West was confined to the shadows of the fur trading posts.<sup>2</sup>

Attempting to exert some degree of control over the Territories, the Canadian government passed the

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Great Britain, 1868, cap. 105. The actual transfer was to take place June 23, 1870.

<sup>2</sup>James B. Hedges, Building the Canadian West: The Land and Colonization Policies of the C. P. R., (New York, 1939), p. 3.





first<sup>1</sup> of a series of acts which was to affect the basic development of the North-West Territories. Its provisional nature was evident from the wording of the Act. It was "to make some temporary provision for the Civil Government of the Territories until more permanent arrangements can be made by the Government and Legislature of Canada."<sup>2</sup> The Act called for a government to be headed by a Lieutenant-Governor with certain powers at his disposal. The Lieutenant-Governor could, if necessary, provide for the administration of justice, establish institutions and make ordinances, subject to the ratification of the Parliament in Ottawa. A council appointed by the federal government, not exceeding fifteen or less than four could be utilized by the Lieutenant-Governor if deemed expedient.

This arrangement for Territorial government was short-lived. In 1870, the Dominion government passed the Manitoba Act, creating a province out of that part of the Territories centered around the Selkirk settlement. Provisions for governing the Territories beyond the Manitoba boundaries were also provided.<sup>3</sup> The Manitoba Act stated that the Temporary Government Act of 1869 would still apply to the remainder of the Territories, with the proviso

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Canada, 1869, cap. 3. An Act for the Temporary Government of Rupert's Land and North-Western Territory when united with Canada.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Statutes of Canada, 1870, cap. 3.



that the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba would, at the same time, also be the Lieutenant-Governor for the rest of the Territories. The next year the Canadian government passed an act<sup>1</sup> authorizing the appointment of an advisory body to be known as the North-West-Council to assist the Lieutenant-Governor.

It was too soon in Territorial history to see distinct lines of social policy emerge, although emergency situations evoked individual government responses. No sooner had the new Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, Mr. A. G. Archibald, taken office than an outbreak of small-pox among the Indians "between the North Saskatchewan and the American border"<sup>2</sup> demanded immediate attention. Assuming he had the constitutional authority to do so,<sup>3</sup> Archibald appointed three men as Executive and Legislative Councillors on October 21, 1870, and with them proceeded to legislate on the threat.

Captain W. F. Butler was commissioned "to proceed to the plains of Alberta to report on the condition of the country, with a view to enacting proper ordinances for the government of that new part of the Dominion of Canada, and to ascertain the extent of the ravages of the terrible epidemic

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Canada, 1871, cap. 16.

<sup>2</sup>L. H. Thomas, The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories, 1870-1897. (Toronto: 1956), p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.





of smallpox that was then raging among the Crees [sic] and Blackfeet tribes of Alberta."<sup>1</sup> Apparently, Butler's report contained an astute analysis of social and economic conditions in the Territories, for many of his recommendations later came to legislative fruition.<sup>2</sup> In an effort to deal with the plague, a Board of Health was formed and was considered by one writer to be "the first form of local government organization to be established in this Province."<sup>3</sup> It is significant to note that at this early stage in Territorial government, health considerations were considered basic to the welfare of the community.

The welfare of children was also a concern for the Territorial government at that time. One early ordinance of the Territorial Council empowered any person in the North-West Territories to bring before two justices of the peace or stipendiary magistrates any child who they believed to be under fifteen years of age with no proper guardianship and at the discretion of judge or magistrate have that child placed in certain voluntary and private institutions, providing the child with basic necessities until sixteen years

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<sup>1</sup> John Blue, Alberta Past and Present, (Chicago, 1924), p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> L. H. Thomas, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> John Blue, op. cit., p. 98. Members of the board included: Rev. George McDougal; Rev. Father Leduc; Rev. Father Andre; Richard Hardisty; Chief Factor; Rev. Father Lacombe; Bishop Grandin of St. Albert; Bishop Faraud of Lac La Biche; Rev. Henry Steinhauer; Rev. Peter Campbell; Rev. John McDougal; John Bunn.





of age.<sup>1</sup> The lack of definition in the ordinance with no accompanying provisions for its administration, reflected in part the basic weakness of the Territorial government. The effective application of legislative enactments was needed in many areas of public concern, but as Professor Thomas has pointed out, the general weakness of the Territorial government at the time did not always make this possible.<sup>2</sup>

In an effort to strengthen government in the Territories, the federal government passed an extensive North-West Territories Act in 1875.<sup>3</sup> Although partially designed to amend and consolidate the laws of the North-West Territories, it laid a stronger constitutional base than any previous Territorial Act. In enlarging the powers of the Territorial government the Act called for a resident Lieutenant-Governor, aided by a council invested with broader executive and legislative powers than the former one. The Lieutenant-Governor and his Council could legislate and make ordinances with reference to taxation for local and municipal purposes, roads, highways, bridges; administration of justice, property and civil rights; public health, which among other things included the upkeep of cemeteries and the prevention of cruelty to animals; gaols and lock-up houses and generally

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of the North-West Council, December 7, 1874.

<sup>2</sup>L. H. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 71-72.

<sup>3</sup>Statutes of Canada, 1875, cap. 49.



all matters of a merely local and private nature.

The Act also provided for a North-West Territories capital which was initially situated at Livingston Barracks on Swan River until permanent buildings were completed at Battleford. One section of the Act<sup>1</sup> empowered the Lieutenant-Governor to form electoral districts in any portion of the Territories not exceeding one thousand square miles, containing a population of not less than one thousand persons of adult age, excluding aliens or unenfranchised Indians, and allow that district to elect one member to the Council. When the elected members outnumbered the appointed members, a Legislative Assembly was to replace the Council.

Although a significant document in the history of the North West, the Act of 1875 placed marked limitations on the legislative capacity of the Lieutenant-Governor and his Council. It has been described as a "conservative measure"<sup>2</sup> which, in trying to control the organization of municipalities and school districts, implied definite restrictions and disabilities. One chief limitation which had a pronounced effect on the Territories was the fact that no municipality could be formed unless the terms of the Act of 1875 were met.<sup>3</sup> This meant people outside organized municipalities were forced to struggle as best they could without

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., s. 13.

<sup>2</sup>L. H. Thomas, op. cit. p. 78.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 89.





recourse to municipal government of any description.

Even where municipalities were formed, welfare provisions were not considered basic legislative measures as were public works and the administration of justice. Furthermore, whether there were municipalities or not, frontier conditions still prevailed, leaving most aspects of living to individual initiative. Self-help was a state of mind as well as a necessity.

In 1877, the North-West Territories Act was amended and the powers of the Council were redefined by Federal Order in Council.<sup>1</sup> The powers imparted to the Council resembled in some respects the powers designated to the provinces in the British North America Act, with notable exceptions, including the absence of Section 92 (7).<sup>2</sup> Although neither the terms "health" or "welfare" was used, this section became interpreted as the one which delegated welfare responsibilities to the provinces. As the section was assigned to the provinces, the fathers of confederation undoubtedly thought public welfare was a minor and inexpensive function. Even so, the welfare section was not included in the amendments to the North West Territories Act in 1877. With appropriations to the North-West government controlled by the federal government, and with the Council's power of taxation severely limited, the Territorial

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<sup>1</sup>Order in Council, May 11, 1877, cited by L. H. Thomas, Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories 1870-97 (Toronto, 1956) p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Statutes of Great Britain, 1867, cap. 3.





government was in no position to be saddled with additional expenditures beyond that which was considered basic to the existence of the Territories. Government welfare expenditures did not share in the Territorial list of basic priorities.

Within the next decade, however, population from the more settled regions of Canada moved westward.<sup>1</sup> The new settlers, especially those from Ontario, were not long in demanding the rights and privileges they had enjoyed in the east. Concern over constitutional matters blended with the local demands made by the incoming settlers.

The need for educational facilities and local public works touched the isolated frontier communities even more closely than control of a government located for many, at a remote point and possessing but meagre legislative powers.<sup>2</sup>

Signs of advancing settlement appeared. "... In almost every settlement a school was established on a voluntary basis, and by the same type of co-operative effort a few essential public works were provided."<sup>3</sup>

The western extension of the railways in the 1880's brought new settlers to the Territories, and helped to foment local interest in Territorial affairs. The local demands of the new settlers found outlet, especially in the members elected to the Territorial Council. Largely because of the efforts of the elected members to the Assembly, definite progress was made in school matters

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<sup>1</sup>See A. S. Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, (Toronto, 1938), chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup>L. H. Thomas, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.





and in many other areas of Territorial life.

In the years from 1883 to 1905, the increasing pre-eminence of having local needs met found expression in the autonomy movement, around which the history of that period revolved. With the establishment of the Legislative Assembly in 1888,<sup>1</sup> direct control over local matters by the Territorial government was that much closer.

Nevertheless, many demands of the Territories were not answered by securing a Legislative Assembly. Great difficulties arose over whether the Assembly or the Lieutenant-Governor should control the monies voted by the federal government. The Assembly was "unwilling to accept responsibility without the corresponding right of control."<sup>2</sup> In keeping with the demands of the Assembly, the Dominion government in 1891 passed an amendment to the North-West Territories Act.<sup>3</sup> With this amendment, the Assembly received most of the powers granted to the older provinces with certain notable exceptions. The Act did not make provisions for the Assembly to borrow money, and again excluded the Welfare Section 92 (7) of the British North America Act.

While it was generally understood that municipalities, where they existed, were obliged to take care of indigent residents, there was no direct supervision or co-ordination

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Canada, 1888, cap. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Journals, N. W. T., 1889, p. 142 quoted in C. Cecil Lingard, Territorial Government in Canada: The Autonomy Question in the Old North-West Territories, (Toronto, 1946), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Statutes of Canada, 1891, cap. 22.





on the part of the Territorial government. Even if the federal government had provided legislation for the Territories to act in this area, before the North-West government could have acted with effectiveness, the financial basis on which the government rested needed to be considerably widened.

Even with the granting of responsible government to the North-West Territories in 1897,<sup>1</sup> the welfare section was still withheld from the powers granted to the Assembly. Once again, probably the Territorial government's lack of funds prevented the responsibility for welfare from being added to the official Territorial functions. The financial difficulties of the Territories did not terminate with the granting of responsible government. C. C. Lingard has pointed out the financial position of the Territories in 1897.

They [N. W. T.] could not charter railways, nor borrow on the public credit, while their lands, timber and mineral resources were in the hands of the Dominion Government, upon which the Territorial Government was forced to depend for the major part of its revenues.<sup>2</sup>

It was generally conceded that with the granting of responsible government, provincial autonomy was just a matter of time. Autonomy, it was thought, would mean local government with sufficient legislative and financial powers to deal competently with all local needs.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1896 - 7, cap. 28, s. 8.

<sup>2</sup>C. C. Lingard, op. cit., p. 7.



Provincial autonomy was hastened by a striking growth in the North-West Territories from 1897 to 1905.<sup>1</sup> Including whites and half-breeds, the population in the Territories in 1881 was 56,446; in 1891, 98,967; in 1901, 165,555 and by 1905, the population was 417,956.<sup>2</sup> The large scale immigration flow from 1896 on was to a large extent due to the vigorous leadership of the Minister of the Interior in the Laurier cabinet, Mr. Clifford Sifton, whose biographer writes:

The first thing to do was to settle the empty West with producing farmers; this was also the second, third, fourth and fifth thing to do.<sup>3</sup>

In many ways the North-West Territories was not prepared for the influx of new settlers. On one level, "the new settlements were too small and too widely scattered to bear the burdens which necessarily went with the opening up of new country."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the Assembly, with its grants from parliament and small local income, was in no position to deal effectively with the infiltration of new settlers to the Territories. Lingard has stated the problem succinctly: "... [R]evenues were always inadequate because their increase was never in proportion to the need...."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup>John W. Dafoe, Clifford Sifton in Relation to His Times, (Toronto, 1931), p. 23.

<sup>4</sup>C. C. Lingard, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 12.







With the basis of responsible government laid in 1897, and the pressures created by large numbers of people in the Territories demanding more control over their local affairs, the federal government passed the Alberta and Saskatchewan Acts in 1905, creating two provinces of these names.<sup>1</sup>

Under provincial status the North-West could enjoy the power to amend its constitution, to borrow money for public purposes, to deal with criminal law, to establish charitable institutions such as asylums and hospitals, to charter transportation companies and control public undertakings, and, generally to administer local affairs in more perfect accord with local needs and desires.<sup>2</sup>

Provincial powers including the welfare section now applied to the province of Alberta. The new province was founded amidst a great deal of optimism about its future prospects, with hopes that the welfare provisions which were now part of the provincial government's constitution would have little use.

In reviewing the period up to the founding of the province of Alberta, some general features may be noted. Quite understandably, provincial and municipal institutions were behind the older provinces of Canada.<sup>3</sup> The paucity of welfare services demonstrated the general lack of social and government structure at Alberta's beginning as a province.

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Canada, 1905, cap. 3.

<sup>2</sup>C. C. Lingard, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>See R. B. Splane, Social Welfare in Ontario, 1791-1893: A Study of Public Welfare Administration, (Toronto, 1965).



The privations and hardships of the frontier were well known. Municipal organization, where it existed, was handicapped by lack of funds to support welfare measures and unwillingness to make definite appropriations for same. Many of the same difficulties existed at the Territorial government level. There, the Council had grave financial limitations and necessarily had no desire to allocate money for services that were not considered essential to the basic growth of the economy. Questions such as the ownership of public land, and borrowing on the public credit were the principal considerations of leading minds in the Territories. Perhaps, it was to be expected that welfare was not a primary concern. Lines of thought on public welfare had not emerged in Alberta by the time it became a province. Dire emergencies, such as the smallpox epidemic in 1870 had been met with temporary relief. In such cases, the structure to meet the emergency did not form part of any permanent welfare establishment. Legislation, where it did exist, lacked definition and had no accompanying administrative structure.







## CHAPTER II

### THE INITIAL WELFARE FRAMEWORK, 1905-1914

In the year of Alberta's inception as a province, its people looked forward with optimism to the part they would play in the affairs of the Dominion. Albertans regarded their province as the "sirloin of the Dominion," and activity was the keynote of the time. As one writer remarked about the Canadian West in general, "When one envisages the early period, particularly after the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were formed in 1905, it is a great spectacle -- capital, labour, goods, towns, farms, lots, real estate. The frontier moved every day."<sup>1</sup>

The optimism of the people had considerable foundation. Alberta with its vast land area was considered to be the "last best" agricultural frontier on the North American continent. The population needed to set the province in motion seemed to be forthcoming. During the Laurier administration, immigration to Canada received great impetus. In fact in 1905 "net emigration from the British Isles to Canada exceeded that to the United States.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert England, The Colonization of Western Canada: A Study of Contemporary Land Settlement, 1896-1934, (London, 1936), p. 74.



Along with the Continental European and British immigration, American settlers sought Canadian Land and resulted in 40 percent of the homestead entries on the prairies from 1907 to 1915."<sup>1</sup>

The social ethos of Alberta, at the beginning of its corporate existence, reflected its dual North American and European heritage, modified, at the same time by its own particular frontier experience. In the area of welfare, whether the settlers were of American or British descent, similar attitudes were held, thus revealing the common Anglo-Saxon Protestant basis from which both came. Alberta, because of its late start as a province, avoided many of the practices associated with nineteenth century methods of dealing with various forms of individual dependency. This is not to say, however, that the Alberta public regarded poor and dependent persons in any more favorable light. There is no evidence to suggest that Albertans thought any differently about this segment of society than their forefathers. Indigence was considered symptomatic of sloth, weakness of character and laziness, with the responsibility for the person's unfortunate circumstances laid at his own doorstep. Disabled persons, while regarded in a more sympathetic light, were not considered the responsibility of the government, but that of the private and voluntary segment of society.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-71.







Welfare thinking at this stage of Alberta's development went little beyond the nineteenth century concept of public charity. Although poor farms and houses of industry were not a part of the provincial scene, vestiges of that type of thinking were certainly present. The earliest annual government report stated that:

In view of the demands made upon the funds of the Department [Agriculture] for cases of relief and the support of incurables, it would be well to take up the question of erecting a poor house at an early date.<sup>1</sup>

The basic tone underlying the policy for administering "charity and relief" by the Alberta government was set at an early date and in unequivocal terms. In reviewing his year's work, the Provincial Health Officer, L. E. W. Irving commented:

In all, during the year relief was afforded in whole or in part to some ten families. The Department is exercising the greatest care with regard to this work so as not to give assistance other than when it is absolutely necessary, and then only for as short a time as possible.<sup>2</sup>

In 1905, the province of Alberta lacked a highly complex social structure thus reflecting a paucity of thinking directed towards domestic social concerns. Many of the factors creating modern social problems were in part or totally absent. Industrialization, with its large skilled and unskilled labouring force dependent on economic cycles was not yet part of the Alberta scene. Labouring

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1906, no. 6, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



classes living in congested city quarters were unknown to the new province. Apart from a small mining industry, Alberta was basically a rural and agrarian community which tended to resolve its existing social problems on a local level. It was much easier for a farm family with extra livestock and food to look after their destitute country cousins than their city counterparts who lived on a fixed wage which was often not enough for their own family.

Even where hard times did occur in rural areas, it was regarded not as a social problem, but as an aspect of frontier life. One pioneer described it in these terms. "Poverty on the frontier is shared by all and is not the humiliating poverty that is witnessed where there is class distinction, and, consequently, manhood is not degraded."<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, frontier conditions were often mitigated by the fact that many of the settlers who came to the prairies from the United States at least, were far from destitute. In fact one writer maintains there was a considerable flow of wealth accompanying American settlers to Western Canada. Paul Sharp in his study remarks, "The official estimate of wealth per capita of settlers was one thousand dollars, but observers frequently placed the amount

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<sup>1</sup>W. E. Pollard, A Sketch of the Parry Sound Colonies that Settled Near Edmonton, N. W. T. in the Early Nineties, (London, n. d.). p. 51.







much higher."<sup>1</sup> The author added, "The fangs were taken out of the first few years of the frontier."<sup>2</sup>

Alberta was basically a farming community and its public aspirations were concerned with matters directly associated with agriculture. Leading minds of the period were not concerned with social betterment but were taken up with railway building, the price of wheat and other direct and immediate economic concerns.

The settlers who came to Alberta either from Eastern Canada, the United States or Europe came to be independent proprietors, to possess land, or to establish businesses that would enable them to better their economic position. They came to the West to lead independent lives. The settlers expected this of themselves as well as their neighbors. Their ethic was one of thrift and industry. Settlers from the United States bred in the tradition of Jeffersonian and Jacksonian democracy blended conveniently with the Eastern Canadian and the British example of individualism. Although this independent spirit was welcome in a frontier agricultural community, it militated against the prospects of any proposed social legislation finding a place on any

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Sharp, Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada: A Survey Showing American Parallels, (Minneapolis, 1948), p. 5. quoting Agnes C. Laut, "The Last Trek to the Last Frontier," Century Magazine, 78: pp. 99-112 (May, 1909).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.





party platform in the first provincial election.<sup>1</sup>

As the majority of the settlers that came to Alberta from Eastern Canada, the United States and Britain were Protestant, one writer commented that "Their laissez-faire attitude towards the needy was a reflection of the morality of self-dependence inherent in their Protestant ethic."<sup>2</sup>

Alberta in 1905 prepared itself for a bright economic future. People showed little organized concern for those who could not help themselves. Ideas such as government and public responsibility for dependent members of the community would be a long time coming to the province.

In 1905 the government of the province of Alberta was not highly complex or centralized. In the original Liberal cabinet Premier Rutherford acted as Minister of Education and Provincial Treasurer. The Attorney General's department was headed by Charles Wilson Cross to whom we shall refer later. Public Works, which was at the time considered a most important portfolio, was headed by William Henry Cushing. The twin offices of the Minister of Agriculture and Provincial Secretary formed one depart-

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<sup>1</sup>For the election issues, see Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, ed. J. Castell Hopkins, (Toronto), 1905, p. 469.

<sup>2</sup>John S. Morgan, Social Welfare Services in Canada, Michael Oliver, ed., Social Purposes for Canada (Toronto, 1961), p. 134, citing Irving J. Goffman, Some Fiscal Aspects of Public Welfare in Canada, (Toronto, 1965), p. 19.





ment. A Minister without Portfolio completed the cabinet. There was no Department of Public Welfare; there was no recognizable unit of welfare specialization with any trained staff or personnel. Although it is incorrect to say the provincial government played no part in welfare matters in 1905, the role that it did play was extremely limited. Apart from assuming responsibility for the criminal and the insane of the province, relief of people classed as incurables and destitutes were the only two forms of dependency to receive government assistance. It appears from the government reports that the only difference between incurables and destitutes was that the incurables had grave physical disorders accompanying their destitution. The miniscule responsibility of overseeing the relief of destitutes and incurables was assumed by the catchall Department of Agriculture.<sup>1</sup> The small responsibility involved is recorded in the Deputy Minister's report for 1905 to the Minister of Agriculture. His report noted, "At the formation of the Province, assistance was being given to two females. These have been continued as a charge upon the funds at the disposal of the Province."<sup>2</sup>

Blindness, and other forms of disability as well as widowhood and old age found no remedy unless they were coupled with complete destitution, or came within the de-

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<sup>1</sup> Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1905, no. 6, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.





definition of incurable. The government provisions for meeting even this narrow range of dependency were, in a very real sense, minor. The only provision for so-called "incurables" was a home in Medicine Hat which had been in existence since Territorial days. Before any aid in the form of institutional care was afforded them, their clinical history and financial circumstances were taken fully into account. Provincial assistance, apart from that given to incurables, took the "form of fuel, food, medicine and medical attendance."<sup>1</sup>

Even with this minute amount of public assistance, the spirit in which it was given was begrudging. In 1906 the number of "incurables" chargeable to the provincial government had increased to seven with the number on relief increased to ten. Saddled with having additional incurables and destitute persons as public charges, one government official commented that if more hospitals or a poor house were built, those who were only partially needy might be admitted and could be partly supported by friends.<sup>2</sup>

Before the various departments in the government received statutory basis in 1906, abandoned wives and mothers, neglected families and destitute drunks were all lumped into one category--that of being destitutes--and all were dealt with by the same government authority.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1907, no. 6, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1906, no. 6, p. 173.





The passage of the Agriculture Department Act in 1906<sup>1</sup> clearly delineated the functions of this area of the government. The new Agriculture Department, as well as attending to agricultural interests of the province, was to supervise the interests of public health. Before the Act was in full operation, a separate Public Health Act was passed<sup>2</sup> calling for a Provincial Board of Health to operate within the framework of the Department of Agriculture. The general objects and functions of the board included, among other things, the inspection of hospitals, gaols, orphanages and reformatories. A provincial health officer was assigned the task of discharging these functions. At the same time, the provincial health officer was also obliged to supervise the area of charity and relief which was initially under the Minister of Agriculture. With the provincial health officer superintending the area of charity and relief, it revealed a basic tendency on the part of many governments of the time to associate health with welfare matters.

Along with the Public Health Act, the government passed the Insanity Act in 1907.<sup>3</sup> The Act was to be administered by the Attorney-General's Department. This was the

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1906, cap. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1907, cap. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1907, cap. 7.





case until 1911, when, along with general administrative changes, the Insanity Act was made the responsibility of the Department of the Provincial Secretary. The passage of the Insanity Act anticipated the insane asylum to be completed the following year in Ponoka. Until such time as the new building was completed, chronic cases were to be sent to the asylum in Brandon, Manitoba, while less severe cases were to be provided temporary quarters which, if possible, were to be maintained by the patient's family. The Gaol and Prison Act also passed in 1908<sup>1</sup> provided for a provincial gaol to be erected in Lethbridge. With the establishment of an insane asylum and a provincial prison, the province had started an institutional programme as an instrument for social betterment.

While the part that the province played in the area of welfare slowly emerged, there was no conscious design to have the provincial government assume the major role for welfare services. It was an accepted fact that religious and voluntary organizations would, through their services, undertake the task of alleviating human misfortune as far as their finances and range of influence would allow. The provincial government lent considerable encouragement to these organizations, realizing the extent to which their services were actually needed.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1908, cap. 46.





As early as 1907, an act was passed amending the ordinances of the North-West Territories of 1904, and incorporating the Sisters of Mercy of the North-West Territories. The objective of the organization was representative of a number of other orders that were founded for the same purpose, namely:

To receive keep, and maintain for, without remuneration or compensation for sick, aged, incurable and indigent persons; to maintain, board, lodge, clothe and educate orphans or other children in a suitable manner until they shall respectively attain the age of twenty one or marry under that age as if the said corporation were an individual person to make such an agreement or agreements for adoption. [sic]<sup>1</sup>

The funds to carry out this work were to come from any available source, including grants, gifts, bequests, government, municipal corporations or borrowing from any corporation or individual. Other religious organizations such as the Les Filles de Providence, Les Filles de Jesus and Les Révérends Pères de Sainte Marie de Tinchebray were incorporated with similar social objectives as the Sisters of Mercy.<sup>2</sup>

Secular volunteer organizations were also expected to provide welfare services. These were most likely organized in the larger centers of the province. The Edmonton Daily Bulletin reported a meeting in that city purporting to organize a relief board to act as an "organized association for the purpose of relieving the needy in the city."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., s. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Other orders which were incorporated included Les Prêtres du Sacre Couer de Jesus in 1910; Les Soeurs de la Charité de Notre Dame d'Evron in 1913; Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge, Les Fils de Marie Immaculée, and Ursuline of Jesus.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, February 19, 1909







Representatives from the Presbyterian Church, the Church of England, Knights of Pythias, Salvation Army, the Sons of England and St. George's Society attended. A Civic Relief Committee representative, R. B. Chadwick, acted as one of the chief spokesmen. At the end of this conference, a committee was appointed to ascertain the amount spent on relief and to report to the next meeting, planned for February twenty-sixth. It is unfortunate that results of the next meeting, if there was one, were not published in either the Bulletin or the Edmonton Journal. Further information about welfare developments at this level is limited as there are no extant minutes or published records concerning their activities.

Although the province and religious organizations each played a role in meeting welfare needs, local units of government, where they existed, were also called upon to administer aid to the needy. This practice had originated in the North-West Territories, although at the onset of the province's history there was a great lack of statutory definition in this area.

In 1905, there were 110 units of local government consisting of five cities, twelve towns, fifty-one villages and seventy-two improvement districts.<sup>1</sup> Only in the five major cities of Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Red Deer was welfare organized to any appreciable extent. On the surface, it appeared that municipal governments, along with religious and voluntary organizations, were dele-

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<sup>1</sup>Charlotte Whitton (ed.), Report on Child Welfare in Alberta, I. O. D. E. Alberta Provincial Chapter, 1948. p. 23.





gated to render assistance to immediate residents while the provincial government was to aid those who did not live in organized districts. Evidence, however, suggests that even in some towns, the province assumed certain welfare obligations.<sup>1</sup>

This situation created not only inefficient welfare administration, but begged the central question as to where ultimate welfare responsibility actually rested. This problem was brought to light with respect to destitute burials in the city of Edmonton. A conference on "Pauper Burials" was called for February 18, 1909, to air grievances about the costs incurred by the city of Edmonton. The provincial health officer met with seventeen other people, including C. W. Cross, who represented not the Attorney-General's department, but his Edmonton constituency. Cross maintained that in the past the city had to pay for every pauper whether he came from an outside point or not. He stated he had no objections to burying non-residents, but the cost of burial to the city should be borne by the municipality from whence they came.<sup>2</sup> While Cross thought the responsibility existed at the municipal level, the Edmonton Journal saw the meeting as one to determine if it was a provincial or municipal responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1908, no. 6, p. 190. The government report for 1908 indicates that assistance was issued to residents of Innisfail, Stettler, Fort Saskatchewan and Banff, all of which towns were classified as municipal districts.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, February 19, 1909.





The Journal report claimed the provincial inspector of legal offices wanted the city to look after it, and the city wished the province to assume responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

Although the meeting did not bring immediate results, this issue was partially resolved three years later with the establishment of the Department of Municipal Affairs in 1912.<sup>2</sup> For a government that in 1905 had campaigned on a platform for the "promotion of the welfare of the masses of the people so far as possible by the action of the state,"<sup>3</sup> this particular act underscored the possibility of the state taking a vital and active role in welfare matters. For the new Department of Municipal Affairs was set up to administer the Town, Rural Municipality, Village and Local Improvements Acts.<sup>4</sup> In doing so, the provincial government enjoined the respective units of local government to be responsible for the relief of the poor residents in their districts. Residency was defined in terms of living three consecutive months in the municipality or town as the case presented itself. People who had residency in one area even if they temporarily lived in some other district were the ultimate responsibility of the district where their residence was established.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 19, 1909.

<sup>2</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1912, cap. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, February 11, 1909.

<sup>4</sup>The Village Act was not passed until 1913.

<sup>5</sup>This residency principle exists to this day in Alberta, except that the requirement has been raised to one year.





With the statutory enactments placing responsibility for disseminating relief at a regional level, the government had at least clarified where relief was theoretically supposed to be administered. Most likely their reasons for delegating responsibility to this level stemmed from a belief that local administrators would be closest to the immediate problems, and thus able to deal most adequately with the situation. Part of the government's reasoning may perhaps also have risen from a feeling that those who paid the local taxes for the maintenance of the poor would exercise the most caution in administering relief.

It cannot be said that the provincial government was completely passive in welfare matters, or that it was indifferent to the needs of its people. It was not through neglect or lack of concern, but an act of conscious policy that welfare administration in Alberta was decentralized. Welfare services were never completely decentralized, however, for the provincial government after 1912 still allocated certain funds for the care of destitutes, incurables and pauper burials.<sup>1</sup>

While the provincial government had not passed centralizing welfare legislation, it did pass legislation

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1915 (vol. X), p. 234. During the year 1915, \$8,335.25 was spent on incurables, \$5,342.92 was spent on destitutes and \$499.77 was spent on burial of destitutes. During 1918, \$7,031.50 was spent on incurables and \$11,729.98 was spent on destitutes. Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1918 (vol. XIII), p. 12.





with a view to the prevention of conditions which would necessitate government welfare measures. In the productive third session of the first legislature, with response to recommendations of a Royal Commission headed by Chief Justice A. L. Sifton, the Liberal government passed a Workman's Compensation Act.<sup>1</sup> The details of the Act have been discussed in other works<sup>2</sup> and need not be mentioned here. The meaning of the Act in relation to the social developments of the period, however, bears on this discussion and deserves comment.

C. W. Cross, who had initiated the bill in the Legislature, described the act as a Workman's Insurance Act, the basis of which was insurance by the employer of his workmen against accidents arising out of their employment.<sup>3</sup> This Act was criticized by many employers who thought it was class legislation, that it was socialistic, and that both good and bad men received compensation, then went back to Italy or Hungary to spend it.<sup>4</sup> In response to criticism of the Act, Cross pointed out that it was legislation designed not for labour alone, but for the "public good." Cross argued that it was better to give money to a widow and have her educate her children than have them grow into criminals.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1908, cap. 13.

<sup>2</sup>L. G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta: The History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905-1921. (Toronto, 1959), pp. 56-57.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, March 5, 1909.

<sup>4</sup>Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, ed. J. Castell Hopkins, (Toronto) 1908, p. 547.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 548.





The Attorney-General on another occasion held that the Act would relieve churches and other charitable institutions that hitherto were forced to look after dependents resulting from industrial accidents.<sup>1</sup> Cross maintained he knew of a person who paid "five or ten times as much yearly for charity due to accidents around his factory, than he would have to pay for insurance to his employees."<sup>2</sup>

Although a significant piece of legislation, it had limitations, the most obvious that if an injured person or his dependents were to collect, the accident had to fall within the terms of the then narrowly construed act. Farm workers, men who were disabled other than at work, workers who were sick but not injured, found no remedy under the provisions of the Act. That the employer was liable and not the highest administrative authority in the province revealed the limiting scope of the Act.

During the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, widespread concern for the welfare of children was expressed internationally. In Canada, Margaret Strong contends:

The twentieth century conception of the principles of child welfare has been made possible largely by the development in the nineteenth century of child-labour regulations, compulsory education, and organizations for the prevention of cruelty to children.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, March 13, 1909.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Margaret K. Strong, Public Welfare Administration in Canada, (Chicago, 1930), p. 42.





In 1908, the Alberta government in its first essay in child welfare legislation passed an Industrial School Act<sup>1</sup> which called for the establishment of a "reformatory prison" to be supervised by the Attorney-General's department. The object of the school was to provide for the custody and detention, with a view to their education, industrial training and moral reclamation, of such boys who were resident. The onus was placed on the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to make regulations for the effective operation of the institution. Other major provisions of the Act stated that a child could not be detained for more than a two year period, stipulating that anyone who was "respectable and trustworthy" and would take the responsibility for the child, could remove him from the institution before the two year period expired. The child so removed could then be apprenticed to that person.

The building of an industrial school did not immediately follow. Instead, the Alberta government reached an agreement with Manitoba whereby children who needed this type of institutional care were sent to the Industrial Training School in Portage La Prairie.<sup>2</sup> The following year the provincial government replaced the Industrial School Act with a comprehensive Children's Protection Act.<sup>3</sup> This was, in essence the beginning of Alberta's child welfare

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1908, cap. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1909 (vol. IV), no. 9, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1909, cap. 12.





development. The effect of this Act on future generations of children in the province cannot be overemphasized.

The work that went into the preparation of this Act was extensive, and largely due to the efforts of R. B. Chadwick. In his capacity as Superintendent of the proposed Industrial School, Mr. Chadwick submitted a report recommending that because of the high cost of building such an institution in the province, the arrangement of sending children to Manitoba should be continued. At the same time, Chadwick, in his report, spelled out what he thought the best laws for the protection of children in Alberta would be. His recommendations were based on research from not only the American continent, but on communications of the Departments of Justice of France and Germany, the Barnardo Association of Great Britain, the Child Emigration Society and Sweden and the Department of Child Emigration of Austria.<sup>1</sup>

The report of the Superintendent resulted in the passage of the Children's Protection Act which was introduced to the legislature by the Attorney-General, Mr. C. W. Cross. Ironically, the Act in its final form was "copied largely from the Children's Protection Act of Ontario,"<sup>2</sup> but was introduced with certain amendments to meet conditions peculiar to Alberta. It is to be noted that the Act was regarded in many quarters as a signal legislative accomplishment.<sup>3</sup> Not unexpectedly, Frank Oliver, the militantly Lib-

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<sup>1</sup> Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1911 (vol. VII), no. 10, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Edmonton Daily Bulletin, February 10, 1909.





eral publisher of the Edmonton Bulletin, supported the Act, and the Winnipeg Free Press, which had nothing at stake, congratulated the Alberta government on accepting responsibility for children at such an early stage in its development.<sup>1</sup> The Calgary Albertan endorsed the Act, and mentioned that Manitoba was planning to pass an act similar in principle to the one in Alberta.<sup>2</sup> One editorial eulogized the government for its recognition of the fact that "the state, at least in this area, has an interest and a duty in regard to the material and moral welfare of the children who are to constitute its future inhabitants," and expressed approval that the "Province is an interested party in the welfare of children."<sup>3</sup>

The terms of the Children's Protection Act are an important and revealing commentary on how the province delegated the major responsibilities for its execution to various levels of Alberta society. The act was to be administered by the Attorney-General or such other member of the Executive Council as designated. The Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council was to appoint a person to assume the position of Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children.

A significant feature of the Children's Protection Act called for the Superintendent to urge and assist the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., February 13, 1909.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., February 10, 1909.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., March 4, 1909.





establishment of children's aid societies throughout Alberta. A children's aid society was defined by the Act as "a society having among its objects the protection of children from cruelty and the care and control of neglected children which has been approved by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council." Along with the provisions for children's aid societies, a broad definition of a neglected child was included, defining a neglected child as one who was deserted, or had no parental control, was found begging or receiving alms, or was found associated with drunks or prostitutes.

The philosophy underlying the formation of children's aid societies made possible the raising of neglected and dependent children in a non-institutional atmosphere. This was an unusually progressive practice for the time. Children's aid societies were to be vehicles for placing children in foster homes-- the closest approximation to a child's natural background. The Children's Protection Act with its provisions for children's aid societies was to replace the idea of the industrial school, and allow neglected children to be cared for without the "taint of institutional life."

The responsibility for supervising the Act rested with the Superintendent. His duties, apart from encouraging the establishment of children's aid societies was also to advise and instruct them. In areas where no children's aid societies were formed, the Superintendent himself could exercise all the powers of the society. In towns where the population did not warrant children's aid societies, committees





were to be formed for the same purposes. It was hoped the committee would evolve into children's aid societies as the area in which they were founded grew in population.

The Act made it mandatory for any community over 10,000 to have at their disposal a temporary home or shelter, which would be financed and staffed by the municipality. The shelter was to be used to lodge a neglected child until such time as a foster home was found.

The authority that the children's aid societies could exercise over children was striking. Any police officer without a warrant or an officer of the children's aid society authorized by a district judge or the Superintendent could apprehend a child to be brought before a judge within a week of apprehension. The judge then determined if the child was to be returned home or placed in the care of the children's aid society. If the child was to be placed in a temporary shelter operated by the children's aid society, that organization would be the legal guardian of such a child. Once the judge had placed the child in the care of the children's aid society, all legal rights to the child were vested in the society. This meant the society itself was responsible for providing maintenance and education of the child, or, if possible, the society was to place the child in a foster home where the foster parents would have this responsibility until the child was eighteen years of age. The Act also enabled privately run orphanages, children's and infant's homes or industrial schools to transfer any child to the Superintendent of





Neglected and Dependent Children or to a children's aid society.

The Act made clear that juvenile offenders under the age of sixteen could not be incarcerated before their trials: over sixteen, if they were detained, it was to be in a room that was entirely distinct and separated from the ordinary lockup or police cells. The onus was on the municipality to see that the latter was done, and to ensure that the trials concerning juvenile offenders, though held in an adult court, were to be conducted in camera.

Brief mention is made in the Act that the judge could hand over a convicted juvenile to a home or industrial school, and the managers of such home, school or society could permit adoption by a suitable person, or allow the child to be apprenticed to a suitable trade.

With the passage of the Children's Protection Act, Alberta had perhaps the most advanced child welfare legislation in Canada. In making it mandatory for municipalities over 10,000 to accept responsibility for the founding of children's shelters instead of leaving it to volunteer associations, the Alberta act provided a stronger child welfare framework than did the Ontario Act. One opinion considered the Alberta Act "the broadest Children's Protection Act in force on the American continent."<sup>1</sup>

There was no certainty as to how effective the im-

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1911 (vol. VII), no. 10, p. 8.





plementation of the Act would be. Many areas of child welfare were left undefined. Much was left unsaid as to how the children's aid societies could function in small centers: there was also a lack of definition vis-à-vis the children's aid societies and the provincial government. The Act, however, as it stood, provided a viable basis for the protection and welfare of children in Alberta with a vast opportunity for extensive work by the person appointed as Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children. The appointment of R. B. Chadwick as Superintendent started child welfare development with a force that was at once optimistic and conscientious.

The Children's Protection Act compelled the Superintendent to submit an annual report to the Attorney-General on the activities of the child welfare administration in the province. R. B. Chadwick in his role as Superintendent wrote extensive reports from his initial appointment to his untimely death in 1915. Before his appointment, Chadwick had been involved in volunteer welfare work in Edmonton, the experience of which is revealed in his approach to his new position. The reports Chadwick submitted are an important source of the administrative history of the government of Alberta.

In accordance with the Children's Protection Act, Children's Aid Societies were formed in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.<sup>1</sup> Calgary and Edmonton, being

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1909 (vol. IV), no. 9, p. 18.





cities over 10,000, built children's shelters. Children's committees were formed in smaller areas mainly to secure foster homes in rural areas. Children's aid societies and the committees were advised by Chadwick to use all means at their disposal to improve the home conditions of needy children. Referring to the work done by the children's aid societies and the Committees, Chadwick wrote, "In many cases of child neglect through poverty, work has been secured for the parents and for the older children and in the cases of sickness, funds have been provided for the temporary relief of the family."<sup>1</sup>

This was a revealing statement as it was the first official recognition in Alberta of the fact that child welfare was often associated with poverty. Chadwick also recognized the fact that the functions of this department overlapped with those of the provincial Medical Health Officer.

In cases of destitute families where there are children the work of this department necessarily overlaps with that of the Medical Health Officer of the Province.<sup>2</sup>

Yet there was no accompanying administrative or legislative recognition of this fact, as relief and charity were still functions of the Department of Agriculture, and child welfare the obligation of the Attorney-General's department.

In his report on the second year of operation,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.





Chadwick opposed the establishment of an industrial school maintaining it would only result in sending children to that institution who could be more readily disposed of in foster homes.<sup>1</sup> He felt differently about institutions for the disabled children. At the time Chadwick wrote, arrangements with Manitoba had been made by the Department of Education for the deaf and dumb; arrangements were made with Ontario to care for blind children. Chadwick advocated similar institutions for Alberta, close to the university, for the purpose of giving "medical students of the University the advantage of practical demonstrations and lectures on the treatment of defectives."<sup>2</sup>

During his tenure of office Chadwick always acted in his capacity as government employee and viewed his office as one which should lend positive control and direction to child welfare developments in Alberta. He constantly strove to standardize conditions in children's homes used for welfare purposes. In 1910 he advocated enactments to provide for the licensing of infant boarding homes whereby they would be required to undergo governmental inspection and regulation. He also advised the passage of an act to provide for the licensing of maternity homes and hospitals to allow the proper registration of children born out of wedlock.

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<sup>1</sup> Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1910 (vol. VI), no. 9, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 21.





In 1910, official government supervision of child welfare development was furthered by the appointment of an inspector who submitted a report indicating he travelled 2,884 miles by trail and 9,260 miles by railway, visiting foster homes and various children's homes. In general, the inspector shouldered some of the administrative functions and was chiefly responsible for child welfare outside areas where children's aid societies had been organized.

Chadwick cooperated where possible with the Department of Agriculture in their dealings with destitute families. He often made it possible to provide shelter for the children of destitute parents until such time as the parents were able to maintain them once again.<sup>1</sup>

He strove constantly to apply the Children's Protection Act and at the same time give wider scope to its provisions.

Not enough latitude is allowed to determine whether a child is actually neglected, or is the victim of temporary conditions of destitution through force<sup>2</sup> of circumstances surrounding a mother or family.

Chadwick recommended that it would be a positive good, beneficial to the child and society if, where possible, a per capita grant was given to a widow with dependent children enabling her to stay at home and raise her children.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1910 (vol. VI), no. 9, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1913 (vol. VII), no. 9, p. 192

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1913 (vol. VIII), no. 9, p. 8.



Although his words did not take immediate statutory form, Chadwick's thinking on this matter certainly formed the basis of the Mother's Allowance Act which was passed some years later in 1919.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from his administrative functions as Superintendent, Chadwick sought to educate and instruct the Alberta public on matters of child welfare. He stated in his report of 1914 that, in eighteen months he had given eighty-four lectures, and practically every Sunday of the year was engaged in giving lectures in churches throughout Alberta.<sup>2</sup>

R. B. Chadwick's duties were not confined to the supervision of the Child Welfare Act. In 1913, the provincial government passed a Juvenile Courts Act which Chadwick was to superintend.<sup>3</sup> The Act, in its simplest form, called for every village over five hundred in population to establish a juvenile court. Commissioners appointed under Section 25 of the Children's Protection Act were to act as judges of the juvenile courts of the city, town, village, rural municipality or district to which they were appointed. While the juvenile courts were to be coordinated by the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children the ultimate authority was to rest with the Attorney-General. The

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<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1914 (vol. IV), no. 9, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Statutes of Alberta, 1913, cap. 14.





Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, every agent of the children's aid societies, and every inspector appointed by him, or any municipal official approved by the Superintendent could act as clerks of the court, and prepare the papers and documents for the sessions. The clerk then was to forward this information as well as the outcome of the case to the Superintendent.

The Juvenile Courts Act also provided for the appointment of probation officers which included any inspector under the Children's Protection Act, every agent of the children's aid societies, as well as any volunteer with the express consent of the Superintendent who was willing to act without remuneration. Every probation officer was directly responsible to the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children.

With the passage of the Juvenile Courts Act, probation officers became an integral part of the child welfare structure in Alberta, and furthermore, had a firm statutory basis on which to operate. Prior to this, a form of probation had been in operation, but on a voluntary basis. The effects of the act were soon noticed when Alberta appointed its first woman probation officer, and the Alberta government appointed a provincial probation officer to deal particularly with girls in the rural districts.

The Juvenile Courts Act complemented the Dominion Juvenile Delinquent Act, of 1908.<sup>1</sup> Contributing to juvenile

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Canada, 1908, cap. 22.





delinquency was thus a criminal offence against the laws of Canada. Adults in Alberta could be liable for contributing to juvenile delinquency whether or not they were the parent or guardian of the child. The Act was soon in full operation, and in one years time, crimes against children had remedy at law, under the Criminal Code or the Dominion Juvenile Delinquent Act.

In 1913, an act was passed<sup>1</sup> placing the conditions for adoption on a much firmer basis than was provided in the Industrial Schools Act. The Infants Act provided that any adult person, or a husband and wife jointly might, by going through the Supreme Court, make petition to adopt one or more children. General provisions called for the consent of the child before adoption if the child was over ten years of age: adoption at that time was taken to mean that the natural parents were divested of all legal rights to the child, and the child once adopted, was for all purposes of the petitioners, and was to share full benefits of a natural child.

The effective application of this particular Act was of a highly dubious nature. A former Superintendent of Child Welfare<sup>2</sup> claimed that, notwithstanding the Infant's Act, adopted children entitled to legal status were not granted it in practice. Except for private cases, most children

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1913, cap. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Private interview with C. B. Hill, former Superintendent of Child Welfare, October 10, 1965.





that had been made public wards were placed in homes on a foster home basis, where they were in fact denied the rights of natural children.

In the two years prior to the first world war, Alberta showed signs of advancing social complexity with an accompanying degree of concern about the effect this would have on the welfare of its people. Child welfare emerged with other social problems, the most notable of which concerned the immigrants and foreign-born in Alberta. No one was more acutely aware of this development than the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children.

A report of the Toronto Housing Commission "had brought home a message" to Chadwick.

A great deal of tuberculosis, crime, pauperism and child neglect, not only in Toronto, but in every city on the continent is directly due to bad housing and crowded conditions caused by immigrant people being compelled to economize on living space owing to exorbitant rents.

With the growth of cities in Alberta, social and economic problems of this nature were brought more into the public eye. With the influx of immigrants to the three major cities, public officials felt that problems of assimilation were certain to occur.

According to Chadwick, foreign immigration was creating a major child welfare problem. In one type of immigration, countries in Europe were involved in the

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1913 (vol. VIII), no. 9, p. 13.





practice of placing homeless children in other lands, and Chadwick maintained that it was "a fact that the States of North Dakota and Montana have sent Alberta more cases of child neglect and of immoral young girls than any other states."<sup>1</sup> Various charitable organizations, such as Barnardo's in England, were likewise accused of picking lower class children off the streets, shipping them out to Canada, and having them placed in homes by placing-out societies.<sup>2</sup> Chadwick argued that the major social problems facing the cities were the results of "the breakdown of family and home life through the pressure of immigration."<sup>3</sup>

On occasion, Chadwick's judgment on certain social problems was colored by his personal feelings. On one such occasion, he wrote:

Observation has brought out the fact that both the boys and girls of the foreign born are somewhat different than the Canadian born, as they are precocious as a general rule in sex matters and succumb more readily to immorality.<sup>4</sup>

Aside from that, Chadwick felt they were equal to those born in Canada.

Along with immigration and the foreign born, the problem of "mental defectives" became a real and vital concern to Chadwick and his department. The difficulty arose out

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 36.





of the problem in attempting to place neglected children of this type in foster homes. Whether they were apprehended due to neglect, or children of illegitimate birth, the disposition of these children posed a chronic problem to the authorities. The Superintendent's concern was heightened by the fact that, with the knowledge of "Mendelian principles," it was felt that:

It is almost impossible in the case of mental defectives once being established, to eradicate the defect throughout the stream which has been polluted.<sup>1</sup>

He also felt that it was utterly impossible for a mental defective ever to become morally efficient; and the worst aspect was that these girls could always find a mate even among normal men.<sup>2</sup>

Chadwick believed that the mental defectives in Alberta were a result of the lack of screening immigrants coming into Canada. Not only were the foreign born held responsible for bringing with them a class of mental defectives, but as Professor L. G. Thomas in his study points out, "It became an article of faith that the foreign born had an innate propensity for crime..."<sup>3</sup> Chadwick certainly thought this was true and that homes of foreign born at times became breeding spots of crime among children in spite of the desire on the part of their parents to be

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>L. G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta, p. 66.



respectable law-abiding citizens.<sup>1</sup>

Whether the number of mentally defective children increased from the factors adduced by many people in Alberta, including the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, the need for specialized care for them was very real. In his recommendations for 1913 Chadwick thought the need for legislation concerning "mental defectives" was "the most pressing need of the province at the present time"<sup>2</sup> And for the first time since he had assumed the office of Superintendent, Chadwick seriously considered the advisability of an industrial school for boys, as well as one for girls.<sup>3</sup> This marked a vast departure from Chadwick's former stand on industrial schools.

By the end of Chadwick's tenure as Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, child welfare had made remarkable strides considering the length of time the Children's Protection Act had been in operation. Children's aid societies were operative in the four major cities, and following a visit by Chadwick to Taber in 1913, a children's aid society had been organized there.<sup>4</sup> At this stage the children's aid societies, as they were intended to be, were the mainstays of child welfare operations in Alberta. The

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1910 (vol. VIII), no. 9, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1913 (vol. VIII), no. 9, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 81.





municipal officials operated the children's shelters as prescribed by the Act, if not in a highly professional fashion, certainly in a zealous one.

If children's aid societies were formed in the smaller towns in Alberta, they did not submit to the government any reports about their progress, and as a result it is difficult to assess their role in the child welfare picture. The establishment of children's committees did occur but here again we are handicapped as to knowledge of their effectiveness since they too, submitted no reports to the government. Chadwick wrote that societies in small centers were not effective as they were headed by people who did not have social work uppermost in mind, and were plagued by the additional problem of a shortage of funds.<sup>1</sup>

Although the children's aid societies decentralized the approach to child welfare in Alberta, Chadwick, through his office, continually made recommendations to increase their efficiency. In his second last official report Chadwick still showed concern about the overlapping functions of the children's aid societies and the branch of the Department of Agriculture headed by the Medical Officer of Health. He wrote: "Many children have been charged against us as neglected children, when in reality they were merely cases of destitution requiring temporary care."<sup>2</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1914 (vol. IX), no. 8, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1913 (vol. VIII), no. 9, p. 51





Chadwick never recommended that there should be any administrative union between the child welfare aspect of the Attorney General's Department and the relief and charities branch of the Department of Agriculture. Perhaps, the very establishment of the children's aid societies on a local basis worked against the possibility of any administrative fusion in this area.

At this point in Alberta's development, the legislation in child welfare had gone far beyond the legislation governing relief and charity, negating any possibility of integration of services until the two areas were seen as essentially related.

Along with provisions for the care of neglected and dependent children the system of juvenile courts and organized probation dealt systematically with juvenile offenders. Probation officers for boys were found in the four major cities and women probation officers located in Edmonton, Calgary and Medicine Hat. Although the system of probation was reported as having a fair measure of success it was noted that "considerable difficulty has been experienced in securing 'brothers' who were in a position to give the necessary time and attention to their charges."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout this period there was a close association between the probation officers and the officials of the children's aid societies. Often the problems that confronted

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1914 (vol. IX), no. 8, p. 51. Report of Children's Aid Society in Calgary to R. B. Chadwick.





the two were one and the same. This was particularly true with regard to the delinquent girl and the mental defective. Often neglected girls within the meaning of the Children's Protection Act were at the same time juvenile offenders. Similarly juvenile offenders with repeated convictions were often classified as mental defectives. In both cases temporary shelters operated by the municipalities were considered a poor solution.<sup>1</sup> Both the agents of the children's aid societies and the probation officers saw the need of institutional care for both types of individuals, but as yet no legislation for them was forthcoming.

By the end of 1914 the Children's Protection Act had been in operation for five years and prompted various reactions as to its effectiveness. One opinion about the care of neglected and dependent children came from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Edmonton in a letter to the Superintendent. Archbishop Legal criticized the very base on which child welfare in Alberta was constructed:

I must say that my own idea is somewhat at variance with the organization of the Children's Aid Society. I believe that for most of the children, especially orphans and neglected children, a complete course of education in a special institution and boarding-school would be far more advantageous. At first sight, the home education of foster parents seems to be all right, but, in fact it may fail on many points because more menial labour than would be proper may be expected from the child or the surroundings may not be all that could be desired or for some other cause.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 78.





The Archbishop maintained that if the children were institutionalized for two years and "categorized," a "real work of reform" could be secured before they could be turned out to foster homes.<sup>1</sup>

Other Albertans felt very differently about the state of child welfare in the Province. With direct reference to the juvenile courts, the probation system and the administration of the Children's Protection Act, W. Roland Winter, Judge of the District Court in Calgary wrote to Chadwick about the success of the department.

It may again be a coincidence, but I cannot help feeling that it is something more, and that it is due to the laws of the province and its administration under the office which you hold that I have not had upwards of three years any cases of juvenile delinquency to deal with.<sup>2</sup>

The District Court Judge of Edmonton, H. C. Taylor remarked in support of Chadwick and his work that, "There can be no doubt but what your department brings in greater returns than any other, returns that are not counted in dollars or cents."<sup>3</sup>

Chadwick never took complete credit for the work of his department and indeed it would be an incomplete picture, if child welfare were seen purely as a function of the government. Voluntary services such as the Salvation Army, the Roman Catholic Church, doctors who provided free ser-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.





vice in the shelters, various hospitals in the province, the Royal North-West Mounted Police and municipal police who aided in probation and the apprehension of children--all formed part of Alberta's child welfare structure.

The appearance of the welfare picture in 1914 was not a balanced one. Child welfare completely overshadowed all other areas of welfare in legislative accomplishment as well as in practice. This can be explained by general interest in children that was widespread throughout North America at the beginning of the twentieth century, of which Alberta was a part. Then, too, the contribution by the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, R. B. Chadwick cannot be overlooked. Although his outlook was on occasion somewhat obscure, the diligence with which he discharged the functions of his office was remarkable. As will be seen later, many of his recommendations were later brought to legislative accomplishment.

With no commensurate amount of concern in other areas of public welfare finding expression in legislative enactment, charity and relief stayed as charity and relief for a long time, and continued to be looked upon as a necessary evil, viewed with classic indifference.



### CHAPTER III

#### WELFARE DEVELOPMENTS, 1914-1919

Although the first world war curtailed the westward flow of immigration by 1916, Alberta had an approximate population of a half million people. Still a basically frontier society, some degree of social complexity had developed in Alberta. The settlers that came to the province brought with them ideas about government and society that had been forged in their former environment.

Alberta, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, was very much influenced by the reforming impulse that swept North America, and indeed parts of Europe also. Because of the geographical proximity and the influx of American settlers from the mid-western and western states, Albertans reflected many facets of their American background. In the presidencies of Republican Theodore Roosevelt and Democratic Woodrow Wilson, American government demonstrated its sensitivity to the various demands for reforming American society at all levels.

Progressivism, the name under which reform moved in the United States was partly rooted in an earlier agrarian movement known as Populism. Some of the reforms that the





Populists had advocated were part of the Progressive list of grievances.<sup>1</sup> Both the Populists and Progressives railed against the domination of big business in government, the monopoly of large corporations, high tariffs. At the same time they sought a more equitable system of taxation and increased government regulation over railways and other businesses that appeared to be making exorbitant profits.

Quite understandably, the more exclusively rural Populist doctrines brought by incoming farmers from states such as Missouri, Nebraska and Kansas were most adaptable to the Alberta scene. Despite the fact Alberta was practically a monolithic agrarian community and part of the American frontier, the province had British institutions and was proud of her membership in the British Empire. The mother country itself, in the early part of the twentieth century, experienced vast change. The "new Liberalism" espoused by men such as David Lloyd George, seemed to recognize the fact that the state had a vital responsibility for the social and economic welfare of its people. In Britain, signs of the social service state were appearing, although the concept of the welfare state was at least a quarter of a century away. In both the United States and Britain, there seemed to be increased demand for state activity to promote the well-being of the people.

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<sup>1</sup>John D. Hicks, George E. Mowry, and Robert E. Burke, The American Nation, 4th ed., (Boston, 1963), p. 270.





The developments in the United States and Britain, perhaps not unnaturally, form an interesting backdrop for welfare development in Alberta from 1914 to 1921. For, as will be seen, Alberta often looked outside its boundaries for direction in bringing social welfare to its people.

One such development which drew its inspiration from outside Alberta was the movement for women's suffrage. It was generally expected that with the advent of the women's vote and their consequent participation in public affairs, the effect would be felt on many levels.

In an address to the meeting of the Alberta Women's Association at the University of Alberta, a Dr. Forbes from Rochester New York, speaking on the significance of women's franchise commented:

Women's interests center in the home: this will influence the legislation they exact. With men, the stress has been placed on the economic side to the exclusion of everything else. With women, the centre of gravity will shift. The deeper spiritual interests of the home and the social<sup>1</sup> relationships of life will be their special field.

Dr. Forbes stressed the importance that the women's vote would have on child welfare, claiming that all legislation, in the last analysis, affected the child in some way. He urged the women of the province to act, and by so doing, "advance the proposition that a child has the right to live where he is not exploited and poverty doesn't deny him the opportunity to actualize his potential."<sup>2</sup> Apart from the

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, January 5, 1916.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.





direct concern to obtain the vote, women had taken up the banner of social reform in various organizations early in the history of the province. As early as 1907, a temperance convention was held at Red Deer resulting in the formation of the Temperance and Moral Reform League of Alberta.<sup>1</sup>

Five years later a local chapter of the National Council of Women was formed in Edmonton.<sup>2</sup> At the annual meeting of the Council in London, Ontario, the national group advocated laws for the better protection of women and children, public health, care of feeble-minded women and stoppage of white slave traffic.<sup>3</sup> The Council also recommended that desertion of wife and family be made an indictable offence and that all provincial legislatures be asked to make the mother equal co-guardian with the father of her legitimate children and that the primary right of guardianship of underaged children should belong to the mother unless she proved to be unfit.

The Social Service League of Canada, with provincial councils in Alberta, called for the abolition of poverty, the equitable distribution of wealth and general legislation which was far in advance of its time in Canada. Among the legislative innovations the Council sought were mother's pensions, unemployment, sickness and old age insur-

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<sup>1</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1907, p. 597.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1912, p. 309.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.





ance, as well as provisions for mental defectives.<sup>1</sup>

Organizations interested in social reform were not the exclusive property of urban women. One of the most significant women's organizations was the United Farm Women of Alberta, whose organization was all the more important as its annual convention coincided with its male counterpart, the United Farmers of Alberta. Together they formed perhaps the strongest united voice of all organized groups in the province.

The first annual report of the United Farm Women was published in 1915, and coupled with the concern for the franchise, the document revealed a strong plea for social betterment. Although interested in reform of a general nature, the women's objectives seemed to polarize around the welfare of themselves and their children. Women of the United Farm Women of Alberta were exhorted to not only look after their children but to be aware of the great movements of reform, instead of "leaving the reforms of social and economic conditions to the other person."<sup>2</sup>

In the various annual reports the United Farm Women of Alberta passed resolutions for a dower act that would allow a married woman to have a joint interest in the estate, thus preventing a husband from willing it away with the wife having no redress at law. Also in 1915, the United

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<sup>1</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1918, p. 598.

<sup>2</sup>United Farm Women of Alberta, Annual Report, 1917, p. 301.





Farm Women of Alberta recommended joint guardianship of legitimate children.<sup>1</sup>

After Alberta women were granted the vote in 1916, the newly-elected president of the United Farm Women of Alberta, Irene Parlby addressed the annual convention of the United Farmers of Alberta and mapped out the areas in which the women's attentions would be focused. "These questions of medical aid, rural education and rural recreation, which come more especially within the women's sphere, we shall continue to work for to the best of our ability."<sup>2</sup>

In a joint address to the United Farm Women of Alberta and the United Farmers of Alberta, Nellie McClung, the arch-prohibitionist,<sup>3</sup> also pleaded the cause. Mrs. McClung's clamor for prohibition was united with broader social aims which resembled those of Irene Parlby. For "fallen women" she felt, "We should all get behind a scheme to start a school for efficiency, a women's cooperative farm where we can take the women offenders and give them instruction in dairying, chicken-raising, gardening, farming, if necessary and give them a second chance to do right."<sup>4</sup> Nellie McClung thought that a woman straying

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1915, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>United Farmers of Alberta, Annual Report, 1916, p.29.

<sup>3</sup>The Alberta Legislature passed the Prohibition Act in the spring of 1916.

<sup>4</sup>United Farm Women of Alberta, Annual Report, 1916, p. 175.



from the moral path should not go to a penal institution as "that brings back the memory of sin." Instead she should work on a farm where she could start life again on an equal footing.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. McClung's thoughts of social reform were representative of a number of women in Alberta. She laid the responsibility not so much at the feet of the individual, but at those of society. Mrs. McClung held that not the individual but society was largely responsible for a person's "downfall."

Although the women of the province, urban and rural, were vitally concerned with women's rights, and the moral uplifting of society, they were also concerned with improving health conditions in the province. Health was considered important because sickness so often accompanied impoverished home conditions and neglected children.

In the years from 1917 to 1920, for the first time in Alberta's history, public discussion arose concerning the possibility of state medicine. Irene Parlby in her annual address to the United Farm Women of Alberta called for a Federal Department of Health with a Bureau of Child Welfare to correlate the health work of all the different provinces. She contended that "we have reached the stage in this Province where we have at least established the principle that the care of Public Health is the duty of the State"<sup>2</sup> and recommended the advisability of going further and demanding a state system of medical and nursing

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1918, p. 76.





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The various women's organizations did not operate in isolation. Often there was liaison among those advocating similar reforms. Such was the case with the United Farm Women of Alberta and the Social Service League as they jointly sought the confrontation of "big social questions of Child Welfare, Sex Hygiene, Law Enforcement and every kind of social and political reform."<sup>2</sup>

Although women's organizations desired to co-operate with each other, the United Farm Women of Alberta in no way wanted to be compared or confused with a government established organization, the Women's Institute of Alberta.<sup>3</sup> Reform groups according to the United Farm Women of Alberta were supposed to spring from local levels and be free from government influence. They did not feel that a women's group with supreme power vested in the government of Alberta was in keeping with "Western Ideas."<sup>4</sup>

Before the Women's Suffrage Act was passed in 1916 it appeared that women's groups had to rely on exerting pressure from outside the government to attain the social legislation they sought. Once the Suffrage Act was passed every representative institution in the province was open

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1917, p. 281

<sup>3</sup>United Farmers of Alberta, Annual Report, 1916, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.





to the women of Alberta. The electorate responded by electing Mrs. Louise McKinney and Mrs. Roberta MacAdams as the first two women to sit in a legislature in the British Empire. The women's drive for equal rights and the accompanying reform spirit made a notable impact on the future of welfare in Alberta.

The women were not alone in seeking reforms in Alberta society. The United Farmers of Alberta, formed in 1909, was every bit as interested in modifying many aspects of life in Alberta. Although initially the United Farmers of Alberta had a strong agrarian bias, their annual conventions from 1909 onwards revealed a widening variety of interests until such time as they actually formed the provincial government in 1921. Their agricultural reforms do not bear directly on this study, but many of their proposed social and economic reforms are pertinent.

Professor Thomas' remark that "Before long the United Farmers of Alberta Convention had more to say in the determination of the policy of the Liberal government than the provincial legislature"<sup>1</sup> is not an overstatement. But often in spite of the pretense of concern for the welfare of all people and living up to their motto of "equity", the United Farmers of Alberta became ensnared in its own image and often failed to see social problems except through an agricultural point of reference.

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<sup>1</sup>L. G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta (Toronto, 1959), p. 206.



Perhaps with the exception of child welfare, the levels of dependency associated with poverty were seen as a result of the faulty economic framework in Canada, but only in relation to the farmer. Poverty was not seen as an issue in itself, but rather as a condition that had arisen as a result of certain members of the community not getting full return for their labours. The underlying assumption was that poverty was unnecessary if the farmers retained a just share of the wealth they created. "It seems that if the farmers got their just price and railways were fair--that hardships would not be and welfare not needed."<sup>1</sup> In 1913 the same kind of opinion was voiced, "Unless we can prevent monopolies, mergers, combines and trusts which are the roots of all our economic evils... we will continue to have hereditary poverty and hereditary wealth."<sup>2</sup> The United Farmers of Alberta did not seem interested in poverty per se, but poverty only in relation to the farming community. The farmers had a formula for economic betterment but it was mostly confined to their own interests.

At the same time, though agriculture considerations were uppermost in the minds of the United Farmers of Alberta, the United Farmers did not hesitate to lend moral support to groups that espoused social reform. At the

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<sup>1</sup>United Farmers of Alberta, Annual Report, 1912, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1913, pp. 6-7.





annual convention of 1917 confirming that the United Farmers of Alberta stood for the "uplift of the social community and the general welfare of the public," the delegates passed a resolution lending full support to the Social Service League whose social objectives included the improvement of law enforcement, child welfare facilities and the reduction of venereal disease.<sup>1</sup>

Often the United Farmers of Alberta would form a double wedge by adding their weight to resolutions passed by the United Farm Women of Alberta. Such was the case with reference to the latter's call on the government to establish some policy concerning the feeble-minded in the province, who, it was felt, composed a majority of the pauper, criminal and prostitute class.<sup>2</sup> The United Farmers of Alberta also endorsed the principle of mothers pensions which was proposed by the United Farm Women of Alberta.<sup>3</sup> Although the United Farmers of Alberta rarely initiated demands for social legislation, they were not long in supporting those who did.

The effect of the United Farmers of Alberta and the United Farm Women of Alberta on the legislative developments in welfare in the years from 1914 to 1919 was remarkable in that there was a government in Edmonton which was

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1917, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1918, p. 96.





supposedly a Liberal administration. Somewhere along the way the Alberta government seemed to have lost its initiative not only in welfare matters, but in most other legislative areas as well. Perhaps a judgment in favor of the Liberal government could claim that the government in responding to the pressures outside caucus were governing by public opinion. Apparently, the voting public attributed this to weakness on the part of the provincial government, which was proved by the Liberal defeat in 1921.

Up to 1914, Alberta's history had been a story of practically unstinted progress. With the onset of the first World War, Alberta for the first time was confronted with living under wartime conditions. The effect the war had on welfare matters reflected clearly how much it affected Alberta's entire population. The Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918 - 1919 to a lesser extent served the same purpose. The combined effects of the war and the Spanish flu revealed at once the lack of welfare services and at the same time helped in an indirect way to aid their development. The two calamities gave the social reformers added impetus and justified in a concrete sense their vociferous demands.

The basic administrative welfare structure formed in the early years of the province was maintained throughout the war. In spite of legislative innovations, Alberta's child welfare framework and the state of other welfare ser-





vices remained much the same as they were before the war.

The replacement of R. B. Chadwick as Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children in 1915 by A. M. McDonald, a one-time Baptist minister, brought no immediate changes to child welfare operations in Alberta. McDonald's observations about the condition of child welfare at the outset of his tenure resembled to an uncanny degree, the impressions of Chadwick.

McDonald had great faith in the children's aid societies, and the placing-out system for children. He was equally as convinced as Chadwick that this system obviated the necessity for constructing orphanages or kindred institutions.<sup>1</sup> Like Chadwick, McDonald saw a problem noted earlier, arising from the lack of provisions for the "in-corrigible girls" and mental defectives, who, he maintained, were the children "clogging up the shelters."<sup>2</sup>

The factor particularly noted by McDonald in his first report was an echo of the refrain voiced by various women's groups. He insisted, "There should be some means of compelling the father to share in the responsibility of the child [illegitimate]. Young women, he maintained, bear the full brunt of their wrongdoing. In many cases they not only suffer disgrace, but are compelled to pay all the ex-

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1915 (vol. XIII), no. 9, part 2, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 27.





penses in connection with the birth and maintenance of the child."<sup>1</sup> Later in 1918, McDonald urged that statutes be set up to establish paternity and make the putative father liable for the illegitimate child until the child was past school age.<sup>2</sup> In advocating that the putative father assume part of the financial obligation for the illegitimate child, McDonald had started government agitation that brought legislative enactment some years later.

After one year, Superintendent McDonald viewed his department and its function with closer observation than when he had first assumed office. By 1916 the effects of the first world war became noticeable in the area of child welfare. Even so, McDonald thought the initial effect was somewhat less than expected "... when it is remembered that there are thousands of broken families at the present time, the surprise is not that we have to deal with a few score cases, but that the number has not been much larger."<sup>3</sup>

Social dislocation resulting from the war was particularly noticed not in the large number of neglected children, but in a 25% increase in the incidence of juvenile delinquency. Apart from the already acknowledged causes of delinquency, McDonald attributed the rise to the decrease in parental control owing to the absence of so

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1918 (vol. XIII), no. 9, part 2, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1916 (vol. XI), no. 9, p. 7.





many fathers at war. McDonald also noted as reasons for the increased delinquency that many male teachers for whom the boys had the greatest respect had also gone overseas to fight. In addition, the spirit of war adventure in the air and the accounts of trench warfare created a desire in the children to imitate these exploits, and consequently children had become involved in incidents of violence.<sup>1</sup>

The increase in juvenile delinquency during the war was also partly explained by the fact that many men who had been acting as probation officers, and had been involved in voluntary child welfare at the community level were overseas. During the entire war years McDonald reported a chronic shortage of male staff at all levels of his department's operations. Quite understandably the quality of foster homes decreased during the war years as older neglected children were often placed in homes that were not basically interested in the children but in combatting a general labour shortage. Although this motive for keeping children had been prior knowledge, the war accentuated it and made it patently obvious.<sup>2</sup>

As his experience increased, McDonald seemed to gain more understanding of the workings of his department, its shortcomings, its limitations, and the direction in which it was headed. One notion that was not long in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1917, (vol. XIII), no. 9, p. 9.



being revised was the effect of prohibition on the conditions creating child welfare problems. McDonald, as well as many other people, originally thought that prohibition would act as a panacea for multitudes of social ills. This notion was short-lived. The actual effect of prohibition prompted McDonald to observe:

As a consequence many families who a year ago were living in a state of absolute poverty, are today in comparative comfort. Money that was spent in drink is now used in procuring groceries, clothing, boots and shoes. The legislative enactments, however, do not change human nature, and there are moral diseases even more deep-seated than the drink habit.<sup>1</sup>

Although McDonald defended the system of child welfare in Alberta, he was an astute observer of the areas in which it could be improved. Firmly endorsing the principle of having children's aid societies administered at the municipal level, McDonald nevertheless warned that "Alberta's societies will have to guard against the danger of thinking that because funds are provided by the municipality, there is no great need of the active co-operation of any large number of citizens."<sup>2</sup> While favorably disposed to partially voluntary contributions, McDonald felt that Alberta had an advantage over the rest of Canada in that the children's aid societies did not completely rely on voluntary subscription. McDonald also saw the necessity of standardizing the work done in the societies and initiated conferences between the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1916 (vol. XI), no. 9, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 57.





government and the individual society presidents to help bring that about.<sup>1</sup>

The Superintendent also became increasingly aware of complications arising out of welfare work carried out at the local level apart from that done by the children's aid societies. The provincial government had no statutory basis which permitted it to co-ordinate or effectively integrate welfare work done at the community and individual level. In spite of the fact McDonald as Superintendent had the power to supervise at least the working of the children's aid society, volunteer organizations were not exposed even to this control. McDonald sought to bring this control into effect. "In communities where private individuals and companies have been permitted to establish baby farms and kindred institutions without any public control, the Province should provide some means for the inspection by a competent official of every home permitted to take the children for board."<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding the obvious deficiencies in child welfare in the province, McDonald reiterated his belief in the principle of children's aid societies. "There is no organization in the community better fitted to wage a real child welfare campaign than the children's aid societies."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1917 (vol. XII), no. 9, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1918 (vol. XIII), no. 9, p. 46.





McDonald was proud of the fact that the province of Saskatchewan had copied Alberta's system to the letter and that the setup in both provinces was far superior to the rest of Canada "in that the welfare of the needy child is not dependent upon the fluctuation of voluntary donations."<sup>1</sup>

The child welfare structure, however, had not undergone even piecemeal revision since the Children's Protection Act of 1909, and what little structure there was in other welfare areas had not undergone any basic change since the passage of the Municipal Acts of 1912 and 1913. Yet Alberta continued to grow in social complexity from circumstances within and without. In the area of child welfare, the interest in children, which was considerable before the war, was heightened throughout its duration. The agent of the Children's Aid Society in Calgary expressed this in a letter to the Superintendent.

The child is at last beginning to occupy the center of the stage. As one result of the Great War, we are confronted today with many serious and perplexing problems....The appalling sacrifice of human life that has taken place on the battle fields of Europe and throughout the world, during the last four years, greatly enhances the value of every child as a national asset, and correspondingly increases the vital importance to the State of all child-saving institutions....<sup>2</sup>

While the war had created a greater interest in children, quite a different event than war also had a profound effect on welfare matters. The influenza epidemic of 1918 - 1919 brought many public officials into touch

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 53.





with people that hitherto had been unknown by the public at large. McDonald wrote, "...the Influenza Epidemic opened up many peoples eyes as to how the other half lived."<sup>1</sup> Both World War I and the influenza epidemic brought into focus the inter-relatedness of social problems. Child welfare seemed to be the leading welfare concern, but it was gradually being placed in context and viewed against the background of broader social issues.

Yet not enough persons in a position to do anything about it held this view. Authorities at the local level, either involved in child welfare or relief work, if hired, were employees of the municipality. This being so, their view of social problems was limited by their restricted vantage point. The municipality was not the level at which new innovations in social welfare policy or practice developed. Part-time volunteers and unspecialized employees did not prove to be social critics of far-ranging influence.

The one person who was in a position to influence the approach of the government to welfare problems was the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children. But the Superintendent in turn was limited in what he could do because he was in charge of a unit of government that by conscious choice on the part of the legislators was highly decentralized. By virtue of his position, McDonald at least was acutely aware of the growing social problems that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 13.





were not met by any level of welfare services. His reports from 1915-1920 were filled with recommendations for improvement of welfare services in the province. Although he did not hold the ultimate power to bring about the required innovations his awareness served to awaken those who could.

Many of the recommendations proposed by McDonald were carryovers from Chadwick's superintendency. McDonald's tendency to stress institutional care for dependent children was perhaps more than that of Chadwick, but was little more than an attempt to contain this element in society. Such was the case with the problem of young girls. McDonald felt that Alberta was in desperate need of an institution that would divide delinquent and dependent girls into four categories: older delinquents, younger immoral girls, immoral girls who have contracted disease, and girls who were not immoral but incorrigible. [sic]<sup>1</sup> At least the Superintendent went further than his predecessor in recognizing variations in juvenile girls and in recommending differential care for them. McDonald was no less enthusiastic about a home for mental defectives, for he was a firmly convinced as Chadwick that "mental defects pass on the quality."<sup>2</sup>

The increased incidence of juvenile delinquency had again revived the demand for the construction of an in-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1916 (vol. XI), no. 9, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 66.





stitution for boys instead of sending the offenders to Brandon. The type of institution McDonald recommended, though, was not an industrial school as Chadwick later recommended but it was to be a type of boy's farm that could be virtually self-supporting.<sup>1</sup> McDonald also recommended the formation of a similar institution for delinquent females where they would be taught the art of being a farmer's wife.

Another of McDonald's recommendations called for the aid of trained psychologists to assist the department in the discharge of its functions. The Superintendent recommended that a psychologist be used to help categorize children in shelters as well as to assist the juvenile police courts to determine in what environment the delinquent child could be placed in order to effect its rehabilitation. McDonald's pleas went without reply at the time but he did forecast that a day would come when psychiatrists and psychologists would be a necessary element in welfare services. In spite of some administrative variance there seemed to be very little basic difference between the attitudes of Chadwick and McDonald towards their official functions. McDonald had inherited a process; the child welfare structures had been in operation for five years, and for the time, was recognized as reasonably up-to-date. McDonald's advocacy of more and specialized institutions was not in-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1917 (vol. XII), no. 9, p. 57.



tended as a basic criticism of the child welfare structure and children's aid societies. Rather, it recognized the fact that the children's aid societies organized at the regional level could perform only to a limited extent. The limitations of the children's aid societies, their lack of professional staff and small financial basis on which to operate, resulted in their inability to keep abreast of Alberta's growing social complexity. Little did McDonald realize that the entire concept of children's aid societies, hence the basis of the Alberta child welfare system was to have its very existence challenged in the next decade.

Throughout the war, interest in neglected and dependent children had quickened, but attitudes toward the poor did not enjoy a similar development. It appeared that the humanitarian and reform impulse was channeled mainly toward the children. It was becoming readily apparent to many observers, however, that neglected and dependent children were often the product of impoverished parents. As yet it was not seen, or if seen, was not admitted, that destitution often caused children to become public charges. Although there was a general feeling that the two were related, authorities only seemed to be prepared to render assistance to children.

As a result there was very little change in the welfare structure designed to meet the needs of the poor. Relief and other forms of assistance were still administered at the municipal level by officials who acted usually in a part-time capacity with no more policy in mind than to save





the municipal ratepayers' money.

The province continued in its established fashion, to appropriate funds for the aid of "incurables" and "destitutes." The only change in the care of incurables came with the erection of three more homes which served the same purpose as the Medicine Hat Home. By 1915, new homes of this nature were operated at Daysland, Athabasca and Midnapore.<sup>1</sup> Most of the funds appropriated for destitutes were for those found in unorganized territory, where both municipal and voluntary aid was totally absent. There was no change whatsoever in the statutory basis for the administration of relief until 1919, when the Department of Health was created.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, the Provincial Health Officer in charge of relief submitted his short report to the Minister of Health instead of the Department of Agriculture. This change was not economically significant, as the amount of assistance granted by the province in 1919 to destitutes and incurables amounted to less than 27,000 dollars.<sup>3</sup> The importance lay in the fact that the government officials increasingly saw that poverty had some relationship to matters of health. It also seemed to indicate that the Alberta government saw health as a distinct area of concern and made statutory provisions to acknowledge it--the second provincial government in Canada to do

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1915, (vol. X), p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1919, cap. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1919 (vol. XIV), no. 9, pp. 10 - 11.





so.<sup>1</sup>THE MOTHER'S ALLOWANCE ACT OF 1919

The year 1919 is an important one to the history of welfare in Alberta. For in that year, a Mother's Allowance Act was passed<sup>2</sup> which represented the first major attempt on the part of the provincial government to directly enter the welfare field.

The terms of the Act set forth that every municipal council in the province of Alberta was to employ inspectors, whose duty it was to receive applications for assistance under the Act. Any widow or wife of any person deemed insane under the Insanity Act having boys under the age of fifteen and girls under sixteen years of age could apply to the inspector of her respective municipality for financial assistance. If the inspector was of the opinion that the mother qualified, he was to forward his recommendation to the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children. If the Superintendent gave his approval to the request for assistance, he in turn forwarded his recommendation to the Attorney-General. If the Attorney-General gave final approval to the application money was to be appropriated by the Legislature for the prescribed purpose.

The final amount that the mother received was paid

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<sup>1</sup>George Kenneth Wright, "The Administrative Growth of the Government of Alberta: 1905-21," (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Political Economy, University of Alberta, 1952), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1919, cap. 6.





by the Province, with the municipality returning 50 per cent of the cost to the government. The municipality was empowered to levy taxes for a specific Mother's Allowance fund or to raise the general taxes in order to meet its fifty per cent commitment. If the municipality was unable to raise the necessary funds by taxation, the municipal authorities were given sanction to borrow the money. Municipalities, whether they were town, city or rural, were responsible for all such applicants who had one year of unbroken residency within their boundaries. Needy cases in unorganized districts, could make direct application to the Superintendent. Moreover, the Superintendent was given the power if he knew of a worthy case, to initiate the granting of assistance by himself, even though the person in question had not made formal application.

The passing of the Mother's Allowance was the culmination and result of many forces; socio-economic, political, personal and impersonal. The idea of mother's allowances had existed in the minds of many Albertans for a number of years. R. B. Chadwick during his term of office called for legislation in this area. One of the first lay references for legislation along these lines came from the prominent woman reformer, Mrs. Emily Murphy. In an address to the Social Council of Women in Edmonton, she exhorted women to "study prison farms and prison reforms, the delinquent and dependent act, infectious diseases act, and widow's pensions."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, March 25, 1916.





As early as 1916 Superintendent McDonald expressed a similar desire for the introduction of mother's allowances into Alberta. His remark came after the mayor of a town requested his department to apprehend the eight children of an impoverished widow. McDonald informed the mayor that the department could not apprehend children on the grounds of poverty alone--that children could only be apprehended on grounds of neglect as defined in the Children's Protection Act. Referring to the widow and her children McDonald stated:

We think the state owes these people a duty. At the present time in twenty-eight states of the American union and more recently in the Province of Manitoba, this problem is solved by a system of mother's pensions. We hope this will be the case in Alberta, soon.<sup>1</sup>

In the next year's report he took up the cause again. Welfare authorities in Edmonton had informed McDonald that 30 per cent of the money expended in relief went to mothers who were saddled with the double obligation of rearing their children and at the same time providing a livelihood for them. Agreeing with the fact that broken homes were a principal cause of creating neglected and dependent children, McDonald again stated that "it is generally recognized that it is the state's duty to see that mothers who make a valuable contribution to the human wealth of a country...should be provided for in a suitable way."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1916 (vol. XI), no. 9, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1917, Vol. XII, p. 7.





McDonald pointed out that New Zealand, Australia, Manitoba and even Saskatchewan had introduced this legislation and agitation for its introduction in British Columbia was already underway.<sup>1</sup>

By 1918 the United Farm Women of Alberta had formally adopted the principle of mother's pension and received support in this position from various women's locals.<sup>2</sup> In the same year the United Farmers of Alberta passed a resolution stating, "Whereas the principle of Mother's Pensions is one for which the United Farm Women of Alberta are working therefore be it resolved that we go on record as heartily endorsing same."<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile signs appeared that the provincial government was ready to act but with a certain amount of trepidation. Premier Stewart explained in part why the government exercised caution with regard to social legislation. "Questions such as Mother's Pensions, Hospitals, etc., involved special taxation and depended on public opinion."<sup>4</sup>

The Premier must have thought public opinion was sufficient at least to prepare for the introduction of the bill. In 1917 the government had appropriated 20,000 dollars to assist the municipalities of the province in providing allowances for widows. It was described by McDonald "as a kind of experiment, but that "the Government is now committed definitely to the policy, and before the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>United Farmers of Alberta, Annual Report, 1918, p.96.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1918, p. 703.



year is ended, Alberta will have a proper Mother's Allowance Act in full operation."<sup>1</sup> But the Superintendent added, "Unworthy mothers must not be assisted. State aid to children should be continued only as long as the state is receiving returns in children properly trained for future citizenship."<sup>2</sup>

There was no person in any better position than McDonald to see the need for this legislation. He had admitted that his "social workers" had too often broken up homes because of poverty. He called upon welfare workers throughout the province to investigate the root cause of situations where children were apprehended. Too frequently, he maintained, "they [welfare workers] save the home at the expense of the children."<sup>3</sup> There was no doubt in his mind that the "primary object of this legislation [Mothers' Allowance Act] is the conservation of home life."<sup>4</sup>

Although the bill was eventually introduced into the Legislature by Attorney-General Boyle, it was not specifically mentioned in the speech from the throne as proposed legislation for the forthcoming session. This fact caused some consternation to Mrs. L. McKinney. Her speech on the throne debate indicated

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1918 (vol. XIII), no. 8, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.





her regret that the administration had made no mention of passing a mother's allowance act. She added that the need for such an allowance had intensified during the last four years and the deaths caused by the influenza epidemic made it still more urgent.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the fact that the government did not give the bill much publicity, in late February, 1919 the bill was finally introduced into the House. On the first reading of the bill it became obvious that no one in the Legislature opposed the bill on principle: "The stand of the opposition and cross benches, however, was that the bill should be broadened to include more classes than widows or wives whose husbands were insane, in the case of families."<sup>2</sup>

Defending his government and the bill, Boyle told the legislature that it was enactments such as this that had allowed Alberta to escape the aspect of poor houses found in many older countries. But the limitations that the state should observe in this area were implicit in his comment "that legislation should be brought in some day making it compulsory for members of a family to look after less fortunate members of the family."<sup>3</sup>

With the second reading of the bill the opposition

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, February 11, 1919.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, February 28, 1919.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. See below p. 91.





voices rose in concert for the wider scope being granted to the bill. Mr. Gillmore asked why the assistance was not extended to deserted wives or wives of prisoners. Both Mrs. R. MacAdams and Mrs. McKinney voiced similar opinions, claiming there were many worthy mothers who needed assistance but did not fall within the terms of the act. Both women felt that if the legislation was to enable mothers to remain at home and raise their children that the proposed assistance was far short of the desired amount to make this possible.

While Boyle considered it conditional as to how much the state could act in this area, Mrs. McKinney did not. She averred that "It should be good business for the state, and not charity, to give protection to all."<sup>1</sup>

It was not only the women who advocated alteration of the bill's provisions. One of the most articulate voices in the House, Dr. G. D. Stanley, the Conservative member for High River, objected to the bill on grounds he felt it was little improvement over the existing legislation. He argued that when a source of income is cut off the mother should automatically qualify; that a woman should not be humiliated by having to ask for assistance. Dr. Stanley also advocated a much stronger position for the government by having the Provincial Secretary assume responsibility not for 50 per cent of the cost of assistance but the entire amount.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



While the bill was eventually to be called the Mother's Allowance Act, many members felt the basic object of the act was the welfare of children. There was no doubt for the Liberal member for Calgary, W. M. Davidson, that the "problem simply was that of safeguarding neglected children. The department of neglected children might be enlarged to take care of this larger duty. Confusion would exist owing to an overlapping of state and municipal responsibility."<sup>1</sup>

George Hoadley, then Conservative member for Okotoks, was even more extreme than Davidson in maintaining that the bill was designed principally for the welfare of children. Hoadley "claimed it entirely a state obligation that children be given a chance to live and develop under favorable conditions....It was not a matter of protecting the mothers--the obligation was that of protecting the child."<sup>2</sup>

While defending the bill, Premier Stewart regarded it as unique in the history of Alberta and that it would mean provincial intrusion into an area formerly occupied by municipal and voluntary organizations. Stewart admitted "state control was the ideal, but such legislation was on trial...making it necessary to proceed carefully."<sup>3</sup> While the Premier felt that children should have as much claim

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.





on the state as on their parents, he felt the question of charity was difficult to avoid and as a result it was necessary to proceed with caution and see how this legislation would work.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile an editorial in the Bulletin observed the passage of the bill, brought into focus the question of advanced social legislation and added that the bill "was one made necessary by the transition from pioneer conditions to those of more complex social order."<sup>2</sup> The Bulletin seemed to feel, as did the House, sympathetic toward legislation that recognized the duty of the state to relieve this class of unfortunates in the province.

After the preliminary debate the bill went to committee. When it emerged, the Conservative member A. F. Ewing proposed an amendment to the effect that the assistance should also be given to families where the husband was an invalid or had been sent to gaol.<sup>3</sup> When the amendment was debated the opposition also advanced the possibility of the Province assuming the total expense of the act. In answer to these charges, Boyle insisted that leaving half of the responsibility in the hands of the municipality would remove the element of charity. He added that a complete system of state control and supervision would make the plan more un-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, March 12, 1919.





sympathetic and expensive in application. The minister stated that "willing social workers ought not to be thrust aside by government officials and that if the state assumed too much responsibility where would the private initiative go."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. McKinney, in reference to the extent of the bill's provisions, insisted that most of the people that needed help were beyond the act, thus relief was still left to the municipalities. Mr. Boyle assured her that the act would be widened as rapidly as its application and success warranted, but the government was in no position to make a commitment without any limitations.<sup>2</sup>

The Ewing amendment failed on a vote of twenty-six to twenty. The original government bill remained intact with the municipality assuming 50 per cent of the cost and the assistance limited to widows and wives of husbands declared insane.

The Mother's Allowance Act represented a limited triumph for those forces who wished the government to assume a commanding position in the administration of welfare to needy people of the province. While there was much controversy as to how the Act was to be administered, no one in the Legislature felt the Province should not act at all. Rather, the debate consisted of how far the province should

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



participate. Whether it stemmed from the fact that they were Conservatives, or merely because they were the loyal opposition, George Hoadley, Dr. G. D. Stanley and A. F. Ewing wanted the Act broadened, and the full financial responsibility to rest with the provincial government.

The first payment under the Mother's Allowance came in May, 1919. Cheques averaging \$37.00 were sent out to 244 widows, one-third of whom were widows of the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919.<sup>1</sup> If the government was hesitant in expanding the provisions of the Act, the person assigned to administer the Act had many of the same reservations. A. M. McDonald in his capacity as Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, was fundamentally opposed to assistance being granted to mothers whose husbands were detained in a correctional institution. "Men must not be encouraged to commit the offence by the knowledge that their families will be taken care of after they have gone."<sup>2</sup> This conclusion arose out of a belief that in dealing with a class of criminals and their dependents, facts about the amount of assistance needed could not be accurately ascertained. The possibility of issuing assistance to wives whose husbands were in gaol for short terms also appalled McDonald.

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<sup>1</sup> Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1919 (vol. XIV), No. 6, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 8.





McDonald was not so much given to moral revulsion with respect to wives whose husbands were completely disabled. In recognizing their circumstances, he commented,

There would not seem to be any serious objection to paying the allowances in cases where the husbands or breadwinner are pronounced by a doctor to be permanently and totally disabled. This is the most worthy class and only old relief measures are available for them.<sup>1</sup>

McDonald saw the immediate effect of the Act, and predicted that within a year's time the amount the Province would have to spend if it was to discharge its functions properly would be at least a quarter of a million dollars.<sup>2</sup>

While the effects of the act were immediate, it became apparent at an early stage that its application would entail certain difficulties. In 1921, the new Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, K. C. McLeod, commented, "Some inspectors try and see how much they can get for the dependent children. Others try and see how much they can save the municipality."<sup>3</sup> In his second report, McLeod added that the chief difficulty of the act seemed to be the reluctance of the municipalities to honor their 50% (share of the cost) because of financial limitations. McLeod observed that "this would indicate that the money for the act should be raised as a general tax, and expended equally

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1920 (vol. XV), p. 28. K. C. McLeod became Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children in 1920 and remained in that office until 1936.





by the one staff or Department."<sup>1</sup> The issue that McLeod raised was an old one. Where should ultimate responsibility for administration of welfare rest? As will be seen, the passage of the Mother's Allowance did not provide an answer. The question remained as to how far the principle of public responsibility would extend now that a start had been made in that direction.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1921 (vol. XVI), p. 6.



## CHAPTER IV

### WELFARE IN ALBERTA, 1920-1929

The passage of the Mother's Allowance Act appeared to usher a new era of welfare development into Alberta. The Alberta government had established the vital principle that in at least one area, the state could assume certain welfare functions, which to this point had been administered at a private and local level. This meant that, for the first time in Alberta's history, maintenance for one area of dependency came from the general funds of the province, and was to be systematically administered. Unlike the assistance granted by the Charity and Relief Branch of the Department of Public Health, the Mother's Allowance was intended to extend not only to areas in which municipalities were non-existent, but to all areas of the province.

Although a precedent had been established, it was a precedent which brought no immediate departure from Alberta's welfare past. The notion that local and volunteer organizations were in the most favourable position to meet welfare needs retained its strong emotional appeal. In fact, this idea was so deeply embedded that the next decade of Alberta's history was devoid of any public welfare legislation which resembled the principle established in the





Mother's Allowance Act. When the next public welfare legislation was passed, the Old Age Pensions Act of 1929, the initiative originated not with the province, but with the federal government.

While it appeared that the Alberta public endorsed government assistance to certain destitute mothers, below the surface of that acceptance existed a state of mind which was basically antagonistic to the very existence of the Act. While many felt that the day of self-sufficiency was passing and people were generally becoming their "brother's keepers,"<sup>1</sup> K. C. McLeod, the administrator of the Mother's Allowance Act, believed that legislation in this area should proceed with caution. In his first report, McLeod stated with direct reference to the Act:

All charities cannot be put into the hands of the government. This would rob us, as a people, of our greatest chance to exercise our better natures.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Irene Parlby felt similarly, but for reasons independent of McLeod's thinking. In an address to the United Farmers of Alberta, Mrs. Parlby denounced the trend she saw.

The home is trying to hand its duties over to the State. I think if women's societies would get back to discussing things more from this standpoint, instead of trusting so much to the passing of legislation, we should see a very great difference in the next generation...and we should not have as many neurotic men and women on our hands.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1921 (vol. XVI), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1920 (vol. XV), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>United Farm Women of Alberta, Annual Report, 1923, p. 34.





Later in 1923, the first United Farmers of Alberta premier, Herbert Greenfield, spoke in the same terms. The Premier made it clear that there was a limit to the government's activities in the way of "paternalism."

We [Alberta] have overstepped that limit in Alberta in recent years and our people have learned to lean unduly on the Government for assistance.<sup>1</sup>

The countervailing ideas to the progressive assumption of welfare duties by the state found legislative expression in the passage of the Maintenance Order Act of 1921.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the Mother's Allowance, the Liberal government halted government expansion of welfare services in their last legislative session. The Maintenance Order Act stated:

The husband, wife, father, mother and children of every old, blind, lame, mentally deficient or impotent person or any other poor person who is not able to work, shall provide maintenance, including adequate food, clothing, medical aid and lodging for such person.

If the person or persons responsible for this did not assume their obligation, an order of maintenance could be made against them. Attorney-General Boyle, who initiated the bill, said that it was an exact replica of the British law in this area, and that it was primarily aimed at those who possessed property and income.<sup>3</sup>

The Act contained a proviso that, if the relatives

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<sup>1</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1923, p. 737.

<sup>2</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1921, cap. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 10, 1921.





were in no financial position to care for dependent members of the family, no action could be taken against them. Although there is no direct information as to how this Act really functioned, likely it made little change in existing practice. For the most part those who were able to look after needy relations probably continued to do so, while those who could not be maintained by their relatives were no better off than before the passage of the act.

The Maintenance Order Act was one of the final pieces of welfare legislation passed prior to the provincial election of 1921. On June 23, 1921, Premier Stewart called for a provincial election to be held in July of that same year. The results proved disastrous for the Liberals, as the United Farmers of Alberta decided to enter candidates and succeeded in capturing thirty-nine of the sixty-one seats in the new House.

Unfortunately, the United Farmers of Alberta inherited office in the midst of post-war economic difficulties. Although the first world war had increased agriculture production, by 1920 agricultural prices had started to drop. One writer described the post-war problems in the following terms:

Apart from the calamitous decrease in prices, high costs of production, high freight rates, and restricted credit combined with a crop failure in southern Alberta to bring the farmers of the province face to face with disaster. As the slump of 1920 deepened into the depression of 1921, it became clear that, for the province as a whole, the post-war boom was at an end.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>L. G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta, p. 189.





The southern half of the province was particularly hard hit by the drought and depressed conditions. Due to poor crops and low price levels, hundreds of families existed under impoverished conditions. The manner in which their needs were met emphasized the lack of public welfare services, and at the same time indicated the government's reliance on volunteer and private associations to meet emergency situations.

The provincial government for its part passed numerous drought relief acts enabling farmers to continue operations until the next harvest. By 1922, the Dominion had joined the province in granting assistance, with each government bearing half of the respective costs.<sup>1</sup>

Government assistance, however, fell far short of meeting the total needs of the people. Private and voluntary efforts throughout the province compensated for the difference between assistance offered by the government and the actual requirements of the needy recipients. United Farmers of Alberta and United Farm Women of Alberta locals outside the drought area sent vast quantities of aid in the form of clothing, food and cash. Women's Institutes in various parts of the province also provided relief of a similar nature.

The Red Cross also figured prominently in disbursing aid to the destitute. Their organization received contributions from private individuals and organizations such as the Calgary Herald, which contributed \$17,000.00 to the re-

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1922, cap. 8.





lief fund.<sup>1</sup> The Red Cross in turn consolidated these donations, and through its central office in Calgary, sent food, clothing and funds to the drought districts.

Due to the major effort on the part of voluntary organizations, the Alberta government had managed to cope with this aspect of the post-war depression without revising its welfare structure. The depressed conditions, however, were not confined to the agricultural areas of the province. Economic dislocation of the postwar years combined with the return of thousands of servicemen created a generalized unemployment problem in Alberta.

Unemployment in Alberta, while it had appeared in 1914,<sup>2</sup> had largely vanished during the war, only to reappear in the 1920's, becoming more or less a chronic phenomenon in those years. Through the Charity and Relief Branch of the Department of Public Health, the Alberta government had granted \$535,435.00 in unemployment relief from August 31, 1921 to March 1, 1922. At the same time, the government did not alter any basic policy or administrative machinery to further accomodate the problem. Many people felt that the government should be doing more to alleviate the unemployment situation than merely grant temporary relief.

As early as 1922, the Alberta Federation of Labour meeting at Lethbridge called upon the United Farmers of

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<sup>1</sup>United Farmers of Alberta, Annual Report, 1920 p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1914, p. 656.





Alberta government to form a permanent policy of relief.<sup>1</sup> As late as the spring of 1925, Premier Greenfield chose to ignore the full implications of unemployment, stating that he had no intention of altering the government's present policy toward unemployment since it would be nearly a thing of the past with the opening of spring work.<sup>2</sup>

Greenfield had considerable governmental support for his policy of issuing unemployment relief on a temporary basis. One cabinet minister maintained that it was absurd to suggest that the government must find work for all, or give maintenance to unemployed workers. Needy cases, he argued, would receive government aid as had been the case in the past.<sup>3</sup> In a debate on unemployment in 1925, Pete Enzenauer, United Farmers of Alberta member for Alexandria, also stoutly defended the official position. He questioned why the government should help an unlimited number of persons who were unable to adapt, and who would not even try to do so. The member added that it was ridiculous to think that the government owed these persons a living, and urged those who were unemployed to seek other jobs.<sup>4</sup>

While labour delegations throughout the province pleaded with the government for some sort of definite un-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1922, p. 833.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Bulletin, April 9, 1925.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 31, 1925.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.





employment policy, both single and married unemployed men resorted to marching on the Legislative Assembly in order to present their own case. This met with as little success as the formal petitions to the government. In a public statement, Premier Greenfield asserted that the Alberta government had no intention of changing its unemployment policy. He explained that the provincial government was already providing assistance to the municipalities for unemployed transients, and that further provincial aid was unwarranted.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the government was also forced to explain its unemployment policies to the Labour representatives in the Legislative Assembly. In the throne debate of 1925, P. M. Christophers, Labour member for Rocky Mountain House, denounced the government for its apathy and inherent thoughtlessness concerning unemployment matters.<sup>2</sup> Both Christophers and his Labour colleague from Calgary, Fred White, pleaded with the government to initiate a concrete policy of unemployment relief which would not only relieve present conditions, but would be a forward-looking measure designed to meet future conditions.<sup>3</sup>

On November 25, 1925, Premier Greenfield resigned, and J. E. Brownlee, the former Attorney-General, assumed

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 20, 1925.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 5, 1925. The Labour members in the House were the most outspoken critics of the government's unemployment policies.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 31, 1925.





the office of provincial premier. Any hopes that the change of United Farmers of Alberta premiers would bring a change in government unemployment policy were soon proved to be ill-founded.

Brownlee appeared as adamant as Greenfield in his belief that unemployment needed no new government policies.

The government policy on relief is to reach the deserving and to reject the undeserving, without committing the province to a scheme of provincial unemployment insurance and without allowing Alberta to become the bread line of Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Brownlee argued that the government could best combat the unemployment problem, not by increasing welfare costs, but by directing the major portion of its attention to the agriculture industry.<sup>2</sup>

While the Labour members were the leading opponents of the government's unemployment policies, other opposition members voiced similar objections. In the 1928 legislative session, the Conservative lawyer, A. A. McGillivray, flayed the government for its lack of unemployment policy, asserting that in the vast majority of unemployment cases, it was the misfortune of the worker rather than his fault. McGillivray acknowledged the fact that unemployment was low in 1928, but he maintained that the present was the time for action, rather than waiting until the soup kitchen era had again returned.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 18, 1927. This speech was reported to be heard amid a "background of cheers" from the government forces.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 9, 1928.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 8, 1928.





Brownlee remained unyielding, as he saw no necessity for the Alberta government to assume a greater role in dealing with unemployment than what it was then doing.

In regard to unemployment insurance, if and when it comes, it will not be in the form of government insurance, but will be on a contributory basis.<sup>1</sup>

While the demand for a government-sponsored unemployment insurance program had formally commenced by the late 1920's, it had failed to become part of government welfare services due to the outright opposition of the United Farmers of Alberta. In failing to provide a system of unemployment insurance, the government had forfeited an opportunity to prepare for the very times which McGillivray had predicted would come. On the next occasion which unemployment insurance was seriously debated, Alberta was already in the throes of an unprecedented world-wide depression.<sup>2</sup>

Although a detailed study of government health policies is outside the direct scope of this work, an examination of the causes of the Sexual Sterilization Act and the movement to introduce state medicine to Alberta is highly relevant to the development of welfare in the province of Alberta.

While at first glance, the Sexual Sterilization Act appears anomalous to welfare development, the study of

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 9, 1928.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of unemployment insurance during the depression, see below, p. 126.





the origins of the act reveals the basic interrelation of the two.

As early as 1923, Hon. R. G. Reid, then the Minister of Health, advocated sexual sterilization as a means of dealing with mental defectives. The only other alternative he mentioned was complete segregation of this class from all other people, which, he maintained was prohibitively expensive. In his speech on the budget debate in 1925, Reid put the question before the House:

Should we provide institutional care for all mental defectives, with all the cost which it entails, or should we not consider the possibility of dealing with the matter in a more drastic way?<sup>1</sup>

He added:

Sometimes it is necessary and just that we should sacrifice sentiment to the greater interests of humanity.<sup>2</sup> this is the thought I would like to leave with you.

The United Farmers of Alberta and United Farm Women of Alberta locals soon began corresponding agitation. The Sedalia United Farm Women of Alberta passed a resolution urging that sterilization "be compulsory by law, as a means of stopping the mentally deficient from producing their kind."<sup>3</sup> Margaret Gunn, in her presidential address to the United Farm Women of Alberta spoke of the defective class in general.

Shall we continue our present system of merely taking charge of the very lowest physical and mental types, those who cause a menace to the state, the

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, April 5, 1923.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>United Farm Women of Alberta, Annual Report, 1924, p. 67.





feeble-minded who in a large measure fill our jails and penitentiaries and make up the great sub-stratum of humanity--social derelicts, doomed because of congenital inferiority to lead lives that are crass and unlovely, and to lower the vitality of our civilization?<sup>1</sup>

She advocated "racial betterment through the weeding out of undesirable strains" and noted that "democracy was never intended for degenerates."<sup>2</sup>

By 1925, the Waskatenau local of the United Farm Women of Alberta had passed a resolution advocating that any person guilty of a sex crime against a girl fourteen years of age "shall undergo at competent medical hands an operation that will render such guilty person sterile thereafter."<sup>3</sup> However, not all United Farm Women of Alberta locals endorsed the principle of sterilization. The Camrose local felt that sterilization constituted "a drastic and violent invasion of the most elementary human rights," and urged the segregation of the feeble-minded, as well as the elimination of "undesirable immigration"<sup>4</sup> which they thought was the chief source of the defective class.

The government, spurred on by outside pressure, began to spearhead the movement. George Hoadley, one-time Conservative member, and now United Farmers of Alberta Minister of Health, was the government's leading proponent

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 69-70.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1925, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1928, p. 59.





of sterilization measures. In the 1926 legislative session, he told the House his reasons for wanting the passage of such an act. Hoadley argued that the state must be protected from the menace of mental defectives. Furthermore he saw no reason why thousands of dollars should be spent on this class instead of those who would return something to society. The province, he added, "should do everything in its power to see that as few as possible feeble-minded people come into the world."<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1928, the government announced its intention to pass a sterilization act in the forthcoming session.<sup>2</sup> The bill aroused great interest and its passage was described as "the stormiest in recent years."<sup>3</sup> Members of the People's Protective League, as well as representatives from various churches watched from the galleries as the bill was vigorously debated.<sup>4</sup>

The bill was attacked on many levels. Colonel C. Y. Weaver, a Liberal M. L. A., argued that the bill was unfair to the individual as well as to posterity. He pointed out that only three states in the United States of America carried out sterilization measures, and was considered successful in only one state.<sup>5</sup> A Liberal colleague, L. A.

<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 24, 1926. Hoadley left the Conservative party and ran as a United Farmers of Alberta member in the 1921 election.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 16, 1928.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 7, 1928.

<sup>4</sup>Edmonton Bulletin, March 6, 1928.

<sup>5</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 25, 1928.





Giroux, opposed the bill on the grounds that it was still not conclusively proved that mental deficiency was hereditary. He disagreed with the very principle of the bill, and was convinced that "social evils" would follow in its wake.<sup>1</sup>

A. A. McGillivray criticized the government for having failed to bring in any specialists to study the question before the introduction of the bill. He maintained that competent medical authority should be sought prior to the passage of such an act.<sup>2</sup>

Even one member of the government spoke against the passage of the Sexual Sterilization Act. Landas Joly, United Farmers of Alberta member for St. Paul, averred that undue power would be vested in a sterilization board to "pronounce judgment on a question that has no unanimous medical opinion anywhere in the world."<sup>3</sup>

The United Farmers of Alberta cabinet, however, remained adamant. While George Hoadley had introduced the bill, both Brownlee and Attorney-General Lymburn defended the measure. Brownlee informed the House that it was a matter of either segregating the mentally defective under state control at heavy expense, or adopting sterilization as the means of control. He registered surprise at the obsolete arguments put forth in criticism of the bill.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 28, 1928.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 24, 1928.





The Premier declared that the basis of "freedom or right of the individual can no longer hold good where the welfare of the state and society is concerned."<sup>1</sup> Lymburn allayed the fears of those who thought the bill was ultra vires of the province. He justified the measure as being covered under Section 93 (13), (property and civil rights),<sup>2</sup> making it strictly constitutional.

Opposition to the bill, although vigorous, did not prevent its passage: on March 6, 1928 the bill was introduced to the House, and on March 21, 1928 it became law.<sup>3</sup>

The Act called for a board of four persons (two persons to be appointed by the Senate of the University of Alberta and the Council of Physicians respectively, and two persons to be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council) to administer the Act. If the board unanimously agreed that a particular mental defective would procreate with "attendant risk of multiplication of the evil by transmission," the members could authorize the sterilization of the individual, provided they obtained the consent either of the individual or those who were legally responsible for him.

While George Hoadley was convinced that the weight

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 25, 1928.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 6, 1928.

<sup>3</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1928, cap. 37. The vote was mainly along party lines, with three of the Labour members, Fred White, Chris Pattinson and Mr. Christophers from Rocky Mountain House voting with the government.





of public opinion was solidly behind the Act, the Edmonton Journal regarded the enactment of this legislation as "most unwise."<sup>1</sup> The Journal criticized the government for passing an act highly experimental in nature without allowing enough time for organized protest by those persons who opposed the bill.

Meanwhile, the government was informed that they had substantial support from influential circles. It was reported that three United Farmers of Alberta locals and ten United Farm Women of Alberta locals supported the measure, and such influential citizens as Mrs. L. C. McKinney and Mrs. Emily Murphy were also in favour. The Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons were known not to oppose the bill, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union had endorsed the principle of the Act.<sup>2</sup>

With the application of the Act, Alberta became the first province in Canada to practice sexual sterilization. The law has never been repealed and even now there is no obvious clamour for its removal from the statute books.

The movement for state medicine, while chiefly a medical concern, also raised a number of social issues pertinent to the study of welfare development in the province of Alberta. Although a concerted plea for state medicine

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 9, 1928.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.





took place in the late 1920's, general mention of such a plan dated back to 1919. W. M. Davidson, Conservative member for Calgary suggested to the House that a state-controlled hospital and medical scheme would produce a vast economic gain as well as considerable improvement in the health conditions of the province.<sup>1</sup> George Hoadley, who was then Conservative member for Okotoks, stated that:

My followers are emphatically in favour of state control of health, with the taxation<sup>2</sup> spread to make the whole province shoulder the cost.

Outside the House, Irene Parlby, in an address to the United Farmers of Alberta Annual Convention, supported the principle of state medicine, and recommended its implementation in Alberta.<sup>3</sup> This initial plea, however, was of short duration, and agitation waned until seven years later.

In 1927, the cause for state medicine was taken up by several United Farmers of Alberta locals, urging a national system operated and controlled by the state, similar to those operating in Britain and other European countries.<sup>4</sup> In the Legislature itself, the appeal was assumed by the Labour representatives. In 1928, on a motion by Fred White, Labour member from Calgary, and seconded by Chris Pattinson, the House agreed to form a commission consisting

<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, February 17, 1919.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Daily Bulletin, March 4, 1919.

<sup>3</sup>United Farmers of Alberta, Annual Report, 1920, p. 116.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1927, p. 41.





of legislative members to enquire into the possibility of state medicine.<sup>1</sup> No members of the United Farmers of Alberta government registered opposition to the motion. George Hoadley, then Minister of Health in the United Farmers of Alberta government, stated, "I have no objection to something that may confer great benefits on the people of Alberta."<sup>2</sup> The report of the commission was to be prepared for the next legislative session.

By 1929, two more United Farmers of Alberta locals had also affirmed their desire for a full investigation by the United Farmers of Alberta central executive into the feasibility of state medicine. Outside the House, Lionel Gibbs was quoted in the Alberta Labour News as saying it was time to reduce the profit motive in medicine, and that state medicine was the means by which to achieve this end. State medicine, Gibbs felt, was a principle just as sound as state education.<sup>3</sup>

When the report was actually presented in the 1929 legislative session, it was a document seventy pages in length based on the study of various medical schemes in France, Germany, Britain and Australia.<sup>4</sup> The report indicated a system of state medicine could be adapted to

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 1, 1928.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Bulletin, February 23, 1928.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 19, 1929.

<sup>4</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1929 (vol. XXIV), pp. 3-70.



Alberta, but only at considerable expense, and would furthermore necessitate separate plans for rural and urban people.<sup>1</sup> The committee advised that a state medical plan would be too expensive for the province to inaugurate, and recommended that the health of Alberta's residents would be better served by accenting preventative rather than curative aspects of medicine. "No programme of purely curative medicine should hamper the state's energies in the sphere of prevention."<sup>2</sup>

While the United Farmers of Alberta government had voted for the study, it was unprepared to implement a state medical plan of the nature described in the report. George Hoadley, although he seemed genuinely interested in the plan, gave no indication that he, as Minister of Health, was prepared to introduce it into Alberta. Most likely, any inclinations of Hoadley's to implement such a plan were overruled by the Premier. When a formal motion for state medicine was presented in 1930 by Chris Pattinson<sup>3</sup>, Brownlee explained his government's opposition to the plan, to the House members. He maintained that the government did not want to plunge Alberta into a scheme which was "taken from the experience of some older

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 25, 1930. See below, p. 126.





country of doubtful application."<sup>1</sup> Brownlee advised the House that the province would benefit greatly "by waiting for the result of the studies to be made by other provinces as well as by continued studies in this province."<sup>2</sup> State medicine, therefore, failed to become part of Alberta's welfare structure, as had unemployment insurance. Both measures met with the same demise because the United Farmers of Alberta government did not espouse either cause.

In the 1920's, child welfare continued relatively independent of other welfare developments. The impetus with which child welfare began in Alberta had abated considerably. This can be explained in part by the fact that child welfare was never a political issue during that time, and was not sustained by public opinion. Since the passage of the Children's Protection Act in 1909, changes in child welfare primarily originated from inter-departmental sources, children's aid societies, or other groups associated with child welfare which channelled their recommendations through the superintendent. Women's groups often advocated revisions in the child welfare structure, but here as well, with the exception of the United Farm Women of Alberta, these groups were largely non-partisan.

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<sup>1</sup>Labour member, E. H. Parkyn, who seconded Pattinson's motion, had previously remarked that "even Russia" was far ahead of many western countries in health matters.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 25, 1930.





Changes which did occur in child welfare in the early 1920's did not involve the administrative structure. For example, the only development in child welfare in 1920 was a home built in Edmonton for mentally defective children,<sup>1</sup> while an amendment to the Children's Protection Act<sup>2</sup> provided increased supervision of maternity homes.

By 1923, though, an act was passed<sup>3</sup> to provide for the protection of children of unmarried parents. The two most significant features of the Act included a provision for financial assistance to the unmarried mother, and a section which made the state responsible for the establishment of paternity, following which the putative father was to be made liable for the maintenance of the illegitimate child until he reached the full age of sixteen years.

Irene Parlby, who was then Minister without Portfolio, explained to the legislature that the Act was similar to those operative in Manitoba, Ontario and British Columbia. She elaborated that the law was much like Danish and Norwegian laws of this kind with some of the more radical features removed.<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Parlby stated that some people wished the Act to extend further than it actually did, but,

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1919, cap. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1920, cap. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1923, cap. 50.

<sup>4</sup>She was perhaps referring to the fact that in Denmark the unmarried mother was compelled to reveal the identity of the putative father.





she maintained, "the Anglo-Saxon people are not prepared for anything so drastic."<sup>1</sup> She further commented that until recent times both church and state had regarded the unmarried mother as beyond the pale, but she believed that any girl who possessed the moral courage to keep her child should merit "our support and sympathy."<sup>2</sup>

The Infants Act was also revised in 1922<sup>3</sup>, which brought modern adoption legislation to Alberta. Another study has dwelt upon adoption in this province<sup>4</sup> and it is sufficient to note here that, with the passage of this act, the powers of the Superintendent concerning the regulation of adoption were considerably increased.

In 1925, a Child Welfare Act was passed<sup>5</sup> which differed little in principle from the Children's Protection Act of 1909. The Act widened the powers of the Superintendent as well as broadened the grounds on which a child could be apprehended for neglect. Children, according to this Act, could be apprehended for being found with vicious associates, found begging, found with obscene pictures, or habitually using obscene, profane and indecent language.

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 23, 1923.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Revised Statutes of Alberta, 1922, cap. 216.

<sup>4</sup>For a full, but biased account of adoption in Alberta, see Welfare in Alberta: The report of a study undertaken by the I. O. D. E., Alberta Provincial Chapter, 1947. (Charlotte Whitton, ed.).

<sup>5</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1925, cap. 4.





The Act also stated that one of the superintendent's duties was to obtain all possible information concerning handicapped children in the province. The superintendent was, in addition, designated to supervise the intake of immigrant children.<sup>1</sup> Any children brought into the province by an organization for purposes of adoption or placement on a foster home basis were to be made wards of the province. The object of this section of the Act was undoubtedly another attempt to halt the influx of the mentally deficient class as a penalty was imposed on any organization which brought such children into the province.

The Act again requested the establishment of children's aid societies or child welfare associations, or committees where the population did not warrant the former.

Although minor changes were made in the child welfare legislative and institutional structure in the 1920's, there is evidence to suggest that basic administrative revision was needed. The children's aid societies had performed invaluable services for the first ten years of their operation, but by 1921, their organization evoked serious criticism by the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, K. C. McLeod.

It is ... noticeable that, according to the Act [Children's Protection], any Children's Aid Society has equal authority with the department. The work should all be done under the Department, and the act formed with that object in view. Children's

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<sup>1</sup>See above, p. 45.





Aid Societies should be local adjuncts and not absolute in their jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup>

McLeod's criticism was unquestionably accurate.

The legislative and institutional innovations had been imposed upon a disintegrating administrative framework. The children's aid societies lacked uniformity and centralized control as well as facing serious financial problems. The individual municipalities in which they were situated were soon forced to assume the entire financial obligation for their operations.<sup>2</sup> As soon as the municipalities assumed the financial cost, the officers of the children's aid societies were appointed by the municipalities to an ever-increasing extent. As a result the children's aid societies became functions of municipal government as opposed to the original design of independent child welfare agencies. The Child Welfare Act of 1925 reaffirmed the existence of children's aid societies, but those which remained bore little resemblance to the societies established under the Children's Protection Act of 1909.

As the 1920's progressed, the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children had decreasing control over the societies as they became more accountable to the municipalities. By 1924, the children's aid societies at Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat had even

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1921 (vol. XVI), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Private interview with C. B. Hill, former Superintendent of Child Welfare, October 5, 1965.





ceased to submit their annual reports to the superintendent.

### Old Age Pension Act of 1929

Prior to 1929, all the social welfare programmes in Alberta, whether in the area of child or public welfare had been financed exclusively by the province and the municipalities. In 1927, the federal Liberal government passed the Old Age Pensions Act<sup>1</sup> which represented "the first significant social welfare program adopted by the federal government."<sup>2</sup> Under the federal Act, Canadians over the age of seventy who possessed an income not in excess of \$365.00 a year could qualify for pension benefits under this plan. The benefits were not to exceed \$240.00 annually.

As it was generally understood that welfare matters were the obligation of the individual provinces, the federal government encouraged each province to adopt the old age pensions legislation by guaranteeing federal grants to cover fifty per cent of the administrative costs of the act.

It was not until 1929 that Alberta passed her enabling legislation,<sup>3</sup> although the federal bill had been passed in 1927. When the provincial act was passed, two noteworthy features were added to the bill that had not

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Canada, 1927, cap. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Irving J. Goffman, Some Fiscal Aspects of Public Welfare in Canada, (Toronto, 1965), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1929, cap. 24.





been envisaged by the Federal House. Clause six of the provincial legislation ordered that ten per cent of the province's fifty per cent obligation was to be assumed by the municipalities, while the eighth clause specified that family members in a position to maintain aged relatives were obliged to do so, and were liable to be served with an order of maintenance in the event they failed to honour this obligation. The two year delay in passing the Act, and the addition of these two clauses forms an important commentary on the United Farmers of Alberta government's approach to public welfare.

While the Alberta Old Age Pension Act was not passed until 1929, Labour member Fred White in the form of a motion appealed to the legislature as early as 1926 to endorse the old age pension plan then being prepared in Ottawa.<sup>1</sup> The motion was approved without debate in the legislature, but Brownlee commented that although in agreement with the measure in principle, "I do not want to tie the province to something I do not know much about."<sup>2</sup>

The following year, White assailed the government not only for omitting any suggestion of old age pensions in the speech from the throne, but also for the absence of remedial social legislation of any description in its programme for the coming session.<sup>3</sup> Not only the Labour members

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, April 8, 1926.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 15, 1927.





wished to see old age pensions included in the welfare structure of Alberta. The Liberals in the Alberta House, contemplating the federal measure, fully supported the national Liberal party's stand.

On February 23, 1927, J. T. Shaw, the Liberal House leader moved:

That the government should introduce at this session, an old age pension bill in harmony with and complementary to the federal legislation now before the parliament of Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Shaw's colleague, W. W. Prevey, Liberal member for Edmonton, seconded Shaw's motion and pointed out that Alberta took care of its aged poor by way of charity, with the result that many deserving persons failed to apply due to their objection to this form of relief.<sup>2</sup>

In a political ploy, to avoid giving the Liberals credit for being the first to champion the old age pension in Alberta, Brownlee proposed a compromise amendment which requested the federal government to assume the entire cost of the pensions instead of the fifty per cent share arranged for the provinces. The amendment was passed by a vote of forty-one to sixteen, with the Liberal, Labour and Conservative members voting against it.<sup>3</sup>

When the 1928 session got underway, the Alberta government announced that it did not intend to enact old

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 23, 1927.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 24, 1927.



age pensions legislation as yet, and would defer the matter until the following session. This set the stage for an acrimonious debate which placed the United Farmers of Alberta government in an embarrassing and uncompromising position.

In the speech from the throne, Shaw vehemently denounced the government for deferring consideration of the old age pension. He argued that lack of funds was an unacceptable excuse as British Columbia had passed her bill, and both Manitoba and Saskatchewan had accepted the federal bill and were preparing to pass enabling legislation.<sup>1</sup> He asserted that the state had a moral duty to care for the persons who would come under the proposed act.

In response to a motion made by Fred White that old age pensions be dealt with in the 1928 session, the Premier attempted to justify his government's reasons for deferring their decision. Brownlee explained that, until the federal government agreed to cover the entire financial burden, the province should continue to minister to the needy aged by the existing methods. If the province passed its enabling legislation now, the federal government would undoubtedly introduce new amendments which would add cost to the provincial expenditure.<sup>2</sup> In defense of the existing system of aid to old and needy people, the United Farmers of Alberta leader continued:

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 7, 1928.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.





Many agencies are carrying on good work in the cities while outside the cities many persons are being maintained in comfort at the expense of the province. It is unlikely that any direct hardship would result<sup>1</sup> by a delay in putting the legislation into effect.

Brownlee's opposition to the bill stemmed in part from his concern that the province would be deluged with applications.

The principle involved is not unlike that in the Mother's Pensions bill and the people who otherwise would not avail themselves of such relief will apply for it once they come under a government act and demand it as a right.<sup>2</sup>

Lionel Gibbs, Labour member for Edmonton, adopted the position that old age pensions were not a form of charity but a high honour for service rendered to the state, and were precisely designed to be available to those who applied. Gibbs attempted to assure the government that only five per cent of the aged were needy because of intemperance and imprudence. "If it is just a case of why don't they save more and drink less, why introduce the Pensions at all?"<sup>3</sup>

Gibbs moved an amendment that immediate action should be taken on the pensions. It was defeated on a vote of thirty-six to fifteen.<sup>4</sup> In the debate on Gibbs' motion, A. A. McGillivray asked why, if the government

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., February 21, 1928.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., February 22, 1928.





was looking after these aged persons, did it not want to accept fifty per cent help from the federal government. He suggested that the age limit for the pension should be reduced to sixty, and stressed the fact that the province owed a considerable debt to these persons, especially the war veterans.

J. T. Shaw contended that the government had not yet properly defended their failure to introduce pensions in the present session. With the old age pensions, he maintained, people had a chance to live independent lives. Under Alberta's existing system, they were forced to live "a life of institutional care and degrading circumstances."<sup>1</sup>

George Hoadley, in defending the position of the government, claimed that most Albertans would not come within the act's provisions and that "in the final analysis no person in need has ever been denied government assistance."<sup>2</sup>

Although it had never been mentioned as an official reason for delaying the passage of the bill, Liberal member Lucien Boudreau insisted that the United Farmers of Alberta government would not pass old age pensions in this 1928 session "because they are afraid that farmers in their constituencies will object to the raising of taxes."<sup>3</sup> Brownlee left the charge unanswered, and concluded the debate

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 22, 1928.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



by stating that it was unfair for the federal government to show a financial surplus, at the same time add expenses to the provinces which were already in financial difficulty.

Meanwhile, in 1928, the United Farmers of Alberta annual convention had initially passed a resolution urging the immediate passage of the necessary legislation, but had replaced that motion by one asking the federal government to assume the entire financial responsibility for the act.<sup>1</sup>

The Edmonton Journal, while cognizant of the need for old age pensions legislation, realized the government's financial position. The Journal defended the decision of the government to delay the passage of the necessary legislation. While aware of the need, the editorial echoed the government's fear that persons who were able to exist without the legislation would take advantage of it once it was passed. This would mean an additional cost which the province could ill afford.<sup>2</sup> The year 1928 closed without Alberta's Old Age Pension Act.

Finally, in the 1929 session, the provincial government was prepared to pass an old age pensions act, which involved bringing the federal legislation into effect in Alberta. The bill, introduced by Hon. R. G. Reid, was passed without dissent.<sup>3</sup> All members of the House agreed

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<sup>1</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1928, p. 539.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 22, 1928.

<sup>3</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1929, p. 489.





with the bill in principle.

The only criticism of the Alberta legislation was directed toward the sections calling upon the municipalities to share 10 per cent of the province's cost, and the order of maintenance provision. Municipal dissatisfaction over the 10 per cent provision had been voiced outside the House. Brownlee, in a remark addressed to the dissident municipal authorities explained that prior to the Old Age Pension Act, the municipalities were responsible for 100 per cent of the cost of aged indigents. Now that they would be relieved of 90 per cent of the cost, they should show appreciation of this fact by contributing at least 10 per cent. The cities of Edmonton and Calgary responded indignantly.

Relief work is not really an official part of a city's yearly program, but is forced upon the municipalities through lack of any other agency to take care of it.<sup>1</sup>

Hon. R. G. Reid defended both clauses of the Alberta act by informing the House that in Manitoba the entire 50 per cent of the cost was borne by local taxation, and that the maintenance provision would only be utilized "in the most flagrant cases."<sup>2</sup>

Reid's words failed to move the opposition in the legislature. G. H. Webster, Liberal member for Calgary, criticized both the provision for the 10 per cent share

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 14, 1929.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 15, 1929.





and the order of maintenance. Moreover, he maintained as many older residents moved to major cities, it was unfair that they should be supported on municipal relief rolls. This emphasized the importance that the municipalities should not have to pay 10 per cent of the old age pension costs.<sup>1</sup>

Both Labour members Fred White and Lionel Gibbs claimed that the provincial government was attempting to put old age pensions on a charity basis, a premise which they felt was inherently wrong. White argued that needy persons would be discouraged from applying for the pension by delegating 10 per cent of the cost to the municipalities.<sup>2</sup>

The order for maintenance provision particularly incensed McGillivray. He remained unalterably opposed, and argued that the aged should not have to accept support from relatives who had refused to come to their aid before the act was passed.<sup>3</sup>

The Premier, however, would not be budged from his position. He defended both provisions to the last, declaring that the cities should be thankful that they were required to pay only 10 per cent of the cost for old persons who once had to be supported 100 per cent. To leave the municipalities responsible for 10 per cent would result in more thorough investigations than if the matter was

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



handled completely by provincial officials. Brownlee's position in respect to the maintenance order provision was that "Relatives should not shirk their duty."<sup>1</sup>

The Edmonton Journal was as outspoken against the government's 10 per cent provision as was the opposition in the legislature. "The claim of indigent people who have been good citizens, for support in their old age, is a state and not a local one."<sup>2</sup> But in supporting the maintenance provision, the Journal made note that the Act was not devised to make all people forget about saving for their retirement years.

Finally, on March 20, 1929, the Alberta old age pension bill received royal assent, and the province, albeit reluctantly, had passed a public welfare measure along much the same lines as the Mother's Allowance Act.<sup>3</sup>

With both the Mother's Allowance Act and the Old Age Pensions Act, general funds from the province were utilized to provide assistance to needy people. Both Acts were non-contributory, and extended to all those who qualified irrespective of their location within the province. Furthermore, both pieces of legislation contained an element of income redistribution, as many who received benefits under

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>The Old Age Pensions Act was different from the Mother's Allowance Act in that the latter was exclusively a provincial measure.





the plans had never been or no longer were productive elements of society. Each measure had an intent to equalize, and represented the province's major provisions prior to 1929, to have the state assume a more predominant role in bringing welfare to the people.

The Old Age Pension Act of 1929 represented the last government act designed to meet the needs of dependent persons while there was still time to think through the measure. By autumn, the Great depression had already commenced. Black Thursday on the market exchange brought the end of an era. It also raised the question of whether Alberta, and indeed the rest of Canada as well, was prepared for what lay ahead.





## CHAPTER V

### WELFARE IN ALBERTA DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

From 1929 to 1936, Canada was in the throes of an unprecedented world-wide depression. The prairie provinces particularly felt its impact.

Production [wheat], which reached a peak of 567,000,000 bushels in 1928, sank to 276,000,000 in 1934, and in 1937 it was down to 182,000,000 -- the lowest yield ever recorded. Wheat prices, which stood at \$1.60 a bushel in 1929, had collapsed to \$0.38 at the end of 1932 and were only a fraction of the cost of production. Farm incomes on the prairies were cut by as much as three quarters, and the threat of bankruptcy hung over the whole of the West.<sup>1</sup>

Among the provinces of Canada, Alberta was one of the most seriously affected. The Alberta government was prepared neither administratively nor psychologically for a depression of such magnitude. In the 1920's the Labour party's demands for an enlarged welfare establishment to enable the province to meet future welfare needs had largely gone unheeded. With the notable exceptions of the Mother's Allowance and the Old Age Pensions Act, Alberta's welfare structure had not undergone any basic revision since the province's initial decade.

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<sup>1</sup>Edgar McInnis, Canada: A Political and Social History (Toronto, 1959), p. 441.



The depression, however, caused a basic reassessment of the fundamental precepts upon which welfare in Alberta was based. Traditional notions about poverty arising from laziness and general incapacity could not fully explain why in 1935, one out of every ten persons in Canada was a recipient of public relief.<sup>1</sup> The prevailing idea, that volunteer organizations and private charity provided sufficient maintenance for the sick and disabled also had its basis completely undermined. Thousands of destitute families served notice that volunteer organizations acting in conjunction with the province did not effectively alleviate the human misery caused by the depression.

While the province and voluntary organizations failed to provide any answer to the depression, the municipalities found themselves in no better position to deal with the emergency.

The situation called for far more massive government action than had ever before been contemplated, not only in the monetary-fiscal fields, but also in that of public welfare. The traditional reliance on municipal and community ventures could hardly suffice....<sup>2</sup>

Although this study terminates in 1936, before the depression had come to an end, a discussion of the period from 1926 to 1936, may help to explain the trend towards the recognition of welfare as a major function of provin-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 442.

<sup>2</sup>Irving J. Goffman, Some Fiscal Aspects of Public Welfare in Canada, (Toronto, 1965), p. 21.





cial government administration.

The pressure that the Labour opposition exerted for expanded welfare services was all the more pronounced when the depression arrived. Reiterating their demands of the 1920's, three Labour members immediately brought forward resolutions calling on the United Farmers of Alberta government, through its office, to take positive action to combat the depression. Mr. Pattinson demanded a system of state medicine and health insurance. C. L. Gibbs asked for a resolution from the House urging the Dominion government to pass a national unemployment insurance act. At the same time, Fred White urged the government to extend the terms of the Mother's Allowance Act to include wives who were incapacitated through illness.<sup>1</sup> Every one of these resolutions was defeated by the government forces. The only resolution that survived in any form was the one calling for state medicine. George Hoadley, the Minister of Health, substituted an amendment to Pattinson's original motion, stating that the government should improve existing health services and study the possibilities of health insurance.<sup>2</sup>

Paradoxically, in the provincial election of 1930, the United Farmers of Alberta government campaigned on its record, maintaining it had done much for the province of Alberta; that it had not passed class legislation and that

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 15, 1930.

<sup>2</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1930, p. 510.





the provincial government should not be held responsible for the depression.<sup>1</sup> The Alberta voting public passed a favorable judgment on the government and out of the sixty-three members of the new Legislative Assembly, the United Farmers of Alberta captured forty seats. All the cabinet ministers were re-elected and the province had voted the farmer's government back for at least five more years.<sup>2</sup>

In the legislative session of 1931, the Labour members once again called upon the government to introduce social legislation to mitigate the effects of the depression. Andrew Smeaton, Labour member for Lethbridge, requested the immediate inauguration of unemployment insurance by the provincial government. He argued that unemployment insurance was one viable alternative to the system of the "dole". While unemployment insurance was not a curative measure, it would certainly relieve untold distress and at the same time not hinder any productive capacity of industry as some members of the United Farmers of Alberta government feared.<sup>3</sup>

Premier Brownlee told the House that he was not opposed in principle to unemployment insurance but defended what the province was already doing.

What Alberta is doing is as complete and comprehensive as anything that could be done under an unemployment insurance scheme and that as much

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 503.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 12, 1931.



is being done here as though such a scheme was in operation....<sup>1</sup>

Brownlee's resigned attitude was borne out by his statement that "It has been shown that periods of prosperity are always followed by periods of depression."<sup>2</sup>

If Brownlee believed in the principle of unemployment insurance, he certainly did not hold that it would markedly improve conditions. The premier maintained that the province was not responsible for the mass unemployment; that its major cause could be attributed to the federal government. He averred that the unemployment problem was largely a result of federal immigration policy, which allowed foreign workers to come to Canada when there were no jobs available even for Canadian workers. According to the Journal, Brownlee accused the federal government and various business interests of trying to make things worse by urging more immigration.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile the Journal felt Mr. Smeaton's resolution calling for a system of unemployment insurance was most unwise at that time. It claimed that serious financial difficulties in Britain and Germany had arisen from the introduction of such welfare measures, and such schemes should not be repeated here. Noting that the American Federation of Labour had refused to endorse the principle in the United

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 12, 1931.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 13, 1931.





States, the Journal asked, "Could Canada safely introduce it if the neighboring country did not do so well?"<sup>1</sup>

The final outcome of the unemployment debate in 1931 was a compromise amendment introduced by members of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal opposition, calling upon the federal government to take immediate steps for the inauguration of such a scheme. While the United Farmers of Alberta opposed introducing unemployment insurance itself, the government showed no opposition to its implementation at a national level. The compromise amendment was passed unanimously.<sup>2</sup>

By 1933, neither the Provincial nor the federal government had initiated a system of unemployment insurance. In the 1933 session, Andrew Smeaton once again introduced a resolution urging the federal government to implement a federal or national scheme of unemployment insurance which was acceptable to all the provinces. The resolution, without any amendments, was again passed unanimously. Mr. H. Farthing, Conservative member for Calgary, voted for the resolution but disliked the thought that industry might be taxed more heavily to provide for the service.<sup>3</sup>

In the years 1932 and 1933, the plan for unemployment insurance was one of the milder formulas for lessen-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 3, 1931.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 9, 1932.





ing the effects of the depression. In the throne debate in 1932, Chris Pattinson suggested that the government might consider assisting unemployed workers by "opening up lands on a co-operative or individual basis," and giving some assistance to these men until they became established.<sup>1</sup>

Certain members of the United Farmers of Alberta government also expressed sympathy with the platform presented by the newly-formed Cooperative Commonwealth Federation at their Regina convention in 1933. W. H. Shields, United Farmers of Alberta member for McLeod, in defending the C. C. F. position regarding land, stated that it was wrong to equate C. C. F. policies with Russian practices.<sup>2</sup> Maintaining that the C. C. F. would be a Canadian party expressing Canadian ideals, Shields added that the nationalization of land would entail holding land in leasehold instead of freehold.

Mrs. Irene Parlby maintained even if the C. C. F. was equated with Russian practices it was no cause for alarm.

It is a pity so many people are holding up Russia as a bogey. It is futile and childish to deny that Russia is carrying out a great and interesting experiment, one that might profoundly influence other countries of the world.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 8, 1932.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 13, 1933.

<sup>3</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 23, 1933. Apparently the Regina Manifesto's proposal for security of farm tenure was taken by Shields and Mrs. Parlby to mean the nationalization of farm land.





Brownlee paid little heed to such wild suggestions. Until he resigned the premiership in 1934, he always stressed the inability of the Alberta government to do more to alleviate the misery of the depression than it was already doing. On many occasions, Brownlee stressed the difficulty of persuading the public that expenditures could only be made to the extent that revenues from various forms of taxation would permit.<sup>1</sup>

Andrew Smeaton felt that Brownlee's financial argument against social legislation was untenable. He was not convinced that a budget balanced on paper was the only goal a government should try to attain. Smeaton wondered how many other budgets would be unbalanced in order to balance the budget of the province. What was needed, he added, was a fundamental change in the economic system.<sup>2</sup>

Late in the 1933 session, C. L. Gibbs, in a speech which reflected his strongly socialist position, advocated a three-point program which he maintained would be more effective than what the governments were doing at the time.

First Gibbs urged that national planning and scientific management be instituted throughout Canada. No scientific planning was possible under the competitive capitalist system. Secondly, he advocated the socialization of all natural resources. Lastly, during the period of

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, February 18, 1933.

<sup>2</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1932, p. 283.





transition from private to public ownership, he urged the retention and extension of existing social legislation with adequate provision for insurance against illness, accidents, old age and unemployment.<sup>1</sup> Brownlee's own feelings differed from the extreme position of Mr. Gibbs, but he agreed there should be a re-organization of industrial society so as to provide for a better distribution of wealth.<sup>2</sup>

### The United Farmers of Alberta Government and the Depression

The difficulties confronting the Alberta government indeed seemed insurmountable. Neither the municipal nor the provincial government was in any position to provide the needed welfare services. Irving Goffman has described this unhappy financial situation. "Not in one Canadian province, in any one year following 1930, did the municipal-provincial revenues left over after provision for ordinary services meet the total cost of relief."<sup>3</sup> He notes that the traditional tax sources of the provinces were inadequate and that the provincial governments were hardly in a position to resort to deficit financing.<sup>4</sup>

Before we examine the United Farmers of Alberta government's response to the depression, it is to be noted

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 9, 1933.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Irving J. Goffman, Some Fiscal Aspects of Public Welfare in Canada, (Papers in Taxation and Public Finance), no. 1, 1965, Canadian Taxation Foundation, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.





that the federal government was forced to enter the welfare field, which, according to the strict interpretation of the B. N. A. Act, was exclusively a provincial matter. Acknowledging the constitutional difficulty, the federal government provided financial assistance for provincial welfare programs on the basis that this was given as a temporary measure to meet emergency conditions. This federal practice became a regular feature of the depression years and was continued throughout the period under review up to 1941.

The overwhelming welfare problem confronting the province was that of mass poverty: men, women and children's living standards had gone far below any reasonable level. Poverty, once a minor government concern, was now a principal one. Generally speaking, the initial welfare programmes designed to meet the emergency were divided into two broad categories - direct relief and public relief works.

Direct relief, slanderously called the dole, usually involved assistance in the form of food, clothing, utilities and rent. This mode of relief was applied mostly to family units, both rural and urban. It was the counterpart of the function of welfare known today as public assistance.

Public relief works was the other main provincial means of alleviating poverty arising from unemployment and was usually applied to single and transient males. This programme differed from direct relief in two respects: the recipients had to work at government-sponsored projects to be eligible for assistance and the assistance came, not in the form of fuel, clothing and rent, but in cash.





Direct relief was in principle the same type of assistance that the municipalities had issued to indigent residents since early in the province's history. Public works as a means of relief had no precedent in Alberta, as there is no evidence to suggest that any municipality had ever utilized relief work as a means of dealing with destitute residents.

In any case, the municipalities, while having complete responsibility for their poor residents, prior to 1929, could afford neither direct relief nor public work relief measures in the 1930's. Both measures, when implemented, were made possible only by the Federal government's intervention. A brief survey of the joint provincial-federal agreements helps to clarify the means by which these relief programmes became operative in the province.

In 1931, the Alberta legislature ratified an agreement<sup>1</sup> signed the year before, between the Federal Minister of Labour and the Alberta Public Works Minister, O. L. McPherson, whereby federal funds were introduced to help finance welfare costs in Alberta. The federal government agreed to pay one third of the direct relief in the municipalities with the provincial and municipal governments providing equally the remaining two thirds of the costs.

In the same agreement, the Dominion also agreed to pay one half of the amount of the direct relief issued in

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1931, cap. 35.





unorganized districts with the province providing the remainder. The federal government also assumed 25 per cent of the cost of public relief work carried on in the municipalities, the province providing another 25 per cent of the cost, with the remainder coming from the individual municipalities.

In 1932, the Dominion and the province entered into another agreement<sup>1</sup> basically similar to the first one. Noticeable changes included the Dominion's assumption of 50 per cent of the cost of the public works done in the municipalities instead of the 25 per cent specified in the 1931 agreement. In the 1932 agreement, the Dominion also agreed to provide 50 per cent of the amount spent on highway relief works done in the province.

The 1932 agreement was more specific than the previous one in that the men engaged in public relief work were to be regulated by an eight-hour day and provided for with fair and reasonable wages. The agreement also specified that men were to be employed without regard to race, religion or political prejudice. Moreover, the agreement stated specifically that the province and the municipalities must bear their own expenses for the administration of the Act. Notwithstanding the federal contributions, the municipalities still could not pay their respective share of relief expenditures. In an effort to remedy this situation

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1932, cap. 10.





the Province, in 1932, passed an act conferring on cities and towns added borrowing powers for the general administration of unemployment relief in the municipalities.<sup>1</sup>

By 1933, with the depression showing no signs of abatement, a new Unemployment Relief Act was passed<sup>2</sup> giving the Lieutenant-Governor wide powers to enter into any agreement with the government of Canada respecting relief measures within the province. The Act also empowered the province to enter into any agreement with cities, towns, villages, municipal districts and improvement districts for the relief of persons within the respective districts. This Act, and subsequent ones of precisely the same nature, provided the financial basis on which the various types of future welfare programmes rested for the remainder of the depression.

The impact of the depression immediately revealed the administrative weaknesses of the provincial government in relation to welfare services. The former functions of the Charity and Relief Branch of the Department of Health were assumed by a Bureau of Charity and Relief in 1930 and placed under the Department of Municipal Affairs. The Bureau was to superintend the granting of direct relief not only in the cities of Red Deer and Wetaskawin and all the towns, villages, municipal districts and improvement dis-

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<sup>1</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1932, Cap. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1933, Cap. 45.





tricts, but also to all transients throughout the province.<sup>1</sup> The Bureau was also to assume the administrative functions of direct relief in the cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat.<sup>2</sup>

While the Bureau of Charity and Relief superintended the aspect of direct relief, an Unemployment Relief Commission set up under the Department of Public Works was to administer the general area of unemployment relief. Unlike the Bureau of Charity and Relief, the Unemployment Relief Commission was principally designed to supervise the public work relief projects for single, homeless, and unemployed men. By 1933, the Unemployment Relief Commission had placed 1,173 single men on relief work projects operated by the province or the Dominion or jointly operated by both.<sup>3</sup> Federal relief camps were most often in the national parks, with the province operating relief camps usually in the Improvement Districts near the Rocky Mountains.<sup>4</sup>

It may be noted in passing that, in addition to supplying direct relief and public works, the province also attempted to relieve unemployment and destitution by adopting what was known as a relief settlement plan. One govern-

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Municipal Affairs, Relief Branch, Annual Report, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. The city of Drumheller was to be included at a later date.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>In 1932, provincial camps were operated at Nordegg, Maycroft, Morrin, Warner, Exshaw, The Gap and Saunders. Federal relief camps operated at Banff, Jasper, Elk Island National Parks.





ment official explained the plan in the following terms:

Under this plan, families otherwise on relief receive assistance not exceeding six hundred dollars to provide equipment and a small subsistence allowance for a period of two years. This loan is contributed equally by the municipal organizations previously administering relief, the Provincial government and the Federal government. The settler must make his own arrangements for land.<sup>1</sup>

The plan met with moderate success as sixteen families from ten towns and twenty-five families from rural municipalities were placed on provincial land under this scheme in 1934.<sup>2</sup> In Alberta, many families went from the severe drought area in the south of the province to land southeast of Edmonton. Surprisingly, to many observers at the time, few chose the vast lands of the Peace River country.<sup>3</sup>

While various plans for unemployment relief came into existence, the municipalities were, at least legally, still responsible for those classed as indigents. Notwithstanding the provincial and federal involvement in direct relief and public works, the Town and Village Act of 1934<sup>4</sup> once again made indigent residents the responsibility of the municipalities. The reason for the pass-

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1934 (vol. XXIX), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Robert England, The Colonization of Western Canada: A Study of Contemporary Land Settlement (1896-1934), (London, 1936), pp. 124-132.

<sup>4</sup> Statutes of Alberta, 1934, Cap. 49.





age of this Act stemmed from the fact that many municipalities had received assistance from the federal and provincial governments for resident indigents who were technically classified as unemployed.

Throughout the depression, both the provincial and federal governments attempted to distinguish between those termed unemployed and those classified as indigents. Both senior governments insisted that indigent residents were the ultimate responsibility of the municipality, and were not to receive direct assistance from either the Province or the Dominion.

As both direct relief and public works relief were largely extemporaneous, criticism of the programmes came from many quarters, frequently based on different grounds. The Labour members of the House took the position that terms for necessitous relief should be expanded<sup>1</sup> and that the present relief amounts should be looked upon as minimums rather than maximums.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, F. R. Falconer, Liberal member for Athabasca, alleged that the residents of the rural districts often failed to receive relief benefits comparable to their city counterparts. Donald McLeod, United Farmers of Alberta member for Stony Plain, claimed that many of his constituents, especially the new settlers,

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, March 23, 1933.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonton Journal, April 10, 1934.



ate potatoes and diseased rabbits as their chief source of food.<sup>1</sup>

Although direct relief and public works received most attention during the depression, other welfare services established before the depression remained in force throughout. Mother's Allowances and Old Age Pensions were firmly entrenched in the provincial welfare structure but were overshadowed by the amount expended in relief measures.

While the United Farmers of Alberta government had refused to endorse the plan for state medicine presented in 1929 it did consent to establish a Health Commission under the direction of George Hoadley.<sup>2</sup> The commission carried on its investigations during 1931 and 1932 and in response to vociferous demands on the part of the Labour opposition<sup>3</sup> presented its findings in March 1933. It advocated the establishment of a state fund, centrally controlled and administered by a state board to finance a contributory health scheme which, if possible, would be made compulsory. A separate plan was to be included for the chronic and incurably ill.<sup>4</sup> The plan was outlined in general terms and did not contain any final details.

Late in the 1933 session, Hoadley reviewed the

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<sup>1</sup> Edmonton Journal, March 15, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Edmonton Journal, March 4, 1934. See p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Annual Review, 1933, p. 272.





commission's findings, but announced the study had not been concluded in its entirety and would continue for at least one more year.<sup>1</sup> The final report was submitted to the Legislature in 1935 and outlined in broad terms "a system of contributory health insurance for the more populated areas of the Province and the services of a doctor and a nurse for pioneer areas."<sup>2</sup>

In 1935, six years from the initial demand for state medicine, an Alberta Health Insurance Act was finally passed.<sup>3</sup> The Act empowered the province to create and administer health insurance districts, if the municipal residents voted for such action. It enabled every person within the medical district to receive hospitalization in a public ward, with medical and dental treatment. The medical practitioner or dentist who had been consulted by a resident was to be paid by the commission according to the terms of the Act.

While it was a health insurance scheme, it was not the type of state medicine that the original proponent of the scheme had envisaged. It was not province-wide and was not centrally controlled, as the eventual implementation of the Act rested not with the provincial government, but with the various medical districts. It was a form of state

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<sup>1</sup>Edmonton Journal, April 8, 1933.

<sup>2</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1934-1935, p. 340.

<sup>3</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1935, cap. 49.





medical insurance, but of a highly decentralized and moderate variety. There was no element of compulsion in the Act as health districts which did not want the medical plan simply did not vote for it.

Up to this point, the discussion of welfare in the 1930's has been largely focused at the provincial level. By necessity the province, with help from the federal government, had taken an increasingly predominant role in providing welfare services. While this was accepted under existing circumstances, neither the province nor the municipalities had lost sight of the fact that before the onset of the depression, welfare had operated primarily at a local and community level. The depression, if it did nothing else, manifested the inherent defects of welfare operations thus based. It became an indisputable fact that local and voluntary organizations had failed to provide effective welfare services when they were most needed.

The need for an examination of the whole area of municipal-provincial relationships led the United Farmers of Alberta government to appoint, on December 1, 1933, a Tax Inquiry Board.<sup>1</sup> Headed by J. F. Percival, the Deputy Provincial Treasurer, this Board examined among other things, the entire financial basis of welfare expenditures in the province. This represented the first provincial

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<sup>1</sup>Canadian Annual Review, 1935-1936. p. 339. The Board was appointed by an Order in Council.





attempt to explore the distribution of welfare functions between provincial and regional levels of government. A brief study of the findings of this inquiry is vitally important to this study, as it not only reveals what the regional levels thought about their respective welfare functions, but also helps understanding of the significance of the passage of the Social Service Tax Act of 1936, as well as the formation of the Department of Relief and Public Welfare in the same year.

The commission solicited the opinions of various municipal and public organizations throughout the province. Briefs were submitted from all parts of the province, and presented on November 30, 1935. While every brief revealed desperate economic conditions, that of the village of Ent-whistle, a particularly hard hit area of the province, represented the position of many towns in similar difficulty.

This village finds itself in a position where it has become impossible to comply with the law in respect to the care of indigents. For more than ten years, all its revenue, except actual necessary expenses, has gone for indigent relief. Under present relief nearly all its population belong to that class.<sup>1</sup>

The brief added that many relatives, knowing the town was liable for the indigents took advantage of the fact.

"Provident individuals [municipal tax payers] cannot for-

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<sup>1</sup>"Report of the Alberta Taxation Inquiry Board on Provincial and Municipal Taxation, November 30, 1935." The report of the evidence taken in this Commission is found in manuscript form in the Legislative Library at Edmonton. Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1935 (vol. XXX), part 2, p. 28.





ever support those who live beyond their means and make no effort to provide for the future welfare of themselves."<sup>1</sup> Welfare services, the town maintained, should be provided not by the municipalities, but out of the general revenues of the province.

The rest of the briefs presented much the same picture as that of the town of Entwistle. They were unanimous in maintaining that it was financially impossible to provide effective welfare services without altering the financial relationship between the province and the municipalities. The only disagreement in the briefs arose as to how the situation could be improved.

The Edmonton Economics Club and the Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce recommended that all social services national in character, including Mother's Allowances, Old Age Pensions and the Workmen's Compensation Act, should be turned over to the Federal government.<sup>2</sup> The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts in its brief, with regard to the constitutional problem, recommended that the province should provide the major portion of welfare services, including free tuberculosis treatment and a compulsory health scheme, and at the same time assume the complete responsibility for neglected children and mental defectives.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.





Instead of adopting the outright position that the province should assume all welfare services, the city of Medicine Hat, in its recommendations, stated that if the provincial government declined to take over the financing and administration of social services, then new sources of municipal revenue would have to be found.<sup>1</sup> The Union of Alberta Municipalities was at one with the city of Medicine Hat in maintaining that the municipalities' basic lack of taxing power prevented them from properly carrying out various welfare functions. They claimed that the entire burden of welfare costs in the municipalities was thrust on real property, which both rural and urban municipalities felt highly unjust. A Union of Alberta Municipalities representative, J. Fitzallen, informed the commission that for the purposes of social services, a tax on income constituted the only sound source of revenue to finance welfare programs.<sup>2</sup> The town of Edson, as well as the city of Edmonton's solicitor, maintained that since social services must be regarded as national in scope they could not be financed by the municipalities whose chief tax was that on land and improvements.<sup>3</sup>

When the chairman of the commission presented his findings, the conclusions were an accurate summary of the recommendations presented. The report called upon the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



national government to assume total responsibility for unemployment relief and old age pensions. The commission also recommended that a public revenue tax be imposed to cover the cost of mental hospitals, sanatoria, and mother's allowances, and that these and other forms of social services should be regarded as provincial rather than municipal in scope. The board held that real property owners were over-taxed to provide welfare services and that the main costs should be borne by the provincial and federal governments.<sup>1</sup>

When the last United Farmers of Alberta budget was handed down in 1935, the Provincial Treasurer, Hon. J. R. Love, thus concluded his speech: "The duties and responsibilities placed on the provincial government are increasing year after year due to the changing conception of the state and there is a tendency to regard the state as the chief force in expanding, consolidating provincial and national life."<sup>2</sup> If this meant that the United Farmers of Alberta government planned to increase its role in all areas of social and economic concern, it was running out of time in which to do so. In the provincial election that year, the Social Crediters swept into power and the United Farmers of Alberta as a political force passed into memory.

Despite the fact that the United Farmers of Alberta government had left the provincial scene, the results of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1935-1936 (vol. XXX), part 1, p. 9. Budget speech for 1933.





the Tax Inquiry Board which they had authorized in 1933 lived after them. Independent of the Social Credit theories of finance and their advocacy for the "equitable distribution of production,"<sup>1</sup> the newly-elected government in its first legislative session acted upon the general recommendations of the Tax Commission.

The Social Credit government in 1936 passed a Social Service Tax Act<sup>2</sup> which empowered every town, city or village to levy three mills social service tax on the equalized assessment of all land within the various districts, thus increasing the municipalities' taxing base. Every rural municipality was to levy a similar tax at the same rate. The proceeds were to be paid into the Social Service Tax Trust Account and forwarded to the provincial government.

This tax meant that the municipalities had transferred to the provincial government their right and obligation to provide welfare services within their respective districts. It also meant that the municipalities relinquished control of one area of local government and the province had no statutory reason to prevent it from entering all spheres of social service within the municipal districts.

Accompanying the social service tax of 1936 was an act setting up the Bureau of Relief and Public Welfare.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1944 - 45 (vol. XXIX), part 5, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup>Statutes of Alberta, 1936, cap. 34. The act was entitled the Bureau of Relief and Public Welfare Act.





The Bureau of Relief and Public Welfare represented the administrative acknowledgement of the Tax Commission's recommendations which called for the province to administer those social services which the municipalities felt were beyond their power.

This act included numerous important features. It was the first time that the term public welfare had ever been used in official parlance within Alberta government circles. The word "charity" was noticeably absent from the official title of the Act. The very fact that the word "charity" was abandoned and the term "public welfare" adopted revealed a governmental change in attitude towards welfare. It meant that welfare had come to be regarded as a public responsibility to be expressed in terms of government action.

The Bureau was to be headed by a commissioner of Relief and Public Welfare, whose duty it was to perform or superintend the performance of such work relating to the collection, assortment, systematization and publication of information, as well as information and statistics affecting indigents and indigent relief. The commissioner was also to supervise any future acts assigned to his department and perform any other functions delegated by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council.

Much of the Act dealt with the definition of residency, representing an attempt to distinguish between those classified as indigents who were still technically a responsibility of the municipality, and those classified as





unemployed, the responsibility for whom rested with the province.

The Act was initially to be supervised by a minister designated by the Executive Council. The significance of the Bureau of Relief and Public Welfare lay in its provision for an administrative core around which other welfare functions would be placed by the provincial government in the years to follow.

By 1937, the administration of the Child Welfare Act, the Domestic Relations Act, the Juvenile Court, Mother's Allowances, Children of Unmarried Parents and the Dominion Delinquent Act had been transferred from the Attorney-General's department to the Department of Health.<sup>1</sup> While the two broad welfare classifications of Child Welfare and Relief and Public Welfare for a time had an independent administrative development, they were united under the Department of Public Welfare, which was established in 1944. The newly created Department of Public Welfare shared its ministry with the Department of Public Health. Not until 1952 did the Department of Public Welfare receive a minister of its own.

The great depression had not only stimulated the thinking of the province concerning public welfare, but also that of the Dominion. The federal government in 1941 appointed a Royal Commission, headed by L. C. Marsh, to enquire into the whole area of social security for Canada.

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1937 (vol. XXXII), part 2, p. 22.





This commission was patterned on the one conducted by Sir William Beveridge in Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> Broadly speaking, the report was an analysis of the situation with recommendations on how best to provide social security for the entire national population through the redistribution of existing incomes.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly the Marsh report had a profound effect on the federal government, for in 1945 at the Dominion-Provincial conference, the findings of the commissions were discussed at great length: "For the first time, a comprehensive and integrated plan which included national health insurance, universal old age pensions and unemployment assistance was proposed by the Dominion."<sup>3</sup> As Professor Goffman points out, the plans were presented on a "take it or leave it" basis, and Ontario and Quebec balked at the proposals, each on different grounds. The writer adds:

Despite its failure, this Conference did indicate that the prevailing view in Canada concerning the state's role in welfare matters had been permanently changed by the depression and the war. What had previously been objectionable philosophically and entertained only reluctantly in the face of emergencies was now regarded as a desirable long-run course of action.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sir William Beveridge, Social Insurance and Allied Services, (London, 1942).

<sup>2</sup> See L. C. Marsh, Report on Social Security for Canada, (Ottawa, 1943).

<sup>3</sup> Irving J. Goffman, Some Fiscal Aspects of Public Welfare in Canada, (Toronto, 1965), pp. 2<sup>1</sup>-26.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.





The Social Credit government of Alberta meanwhile responded to the depression and the war by setting up various reconstruction committees at various departmental levels, calling upon them to submit reports to the Premier for future programming and development. The Reconstruction Committee on Social Welfare was chaired by Cornelia Wood, M. L. A. for Stony Plain.

The report revealed the strong Social Credit bias of its author. The report was a repudiation of welfare measures planned by the Dominion government. It attacked the very basis of Beveridge and Marsh Reports, stating that they were so much alike that they seemed to be inspired by a "common agency", and that "a draft plan had been drawn up and submitted therefrom to the governing bodies of respective nations."<sup>1</sup>

The Wood report claimed that the Marsh report merely advocated a redistribution of existing incomes, which up to this time, have always been inadequate. It regretted that there were no provisions in the Marsh report for the increase of total purchasing power.<sup>2</sup> The Committee lamented the possibility of increased, centralized control of social welfare as an outcome of Marsh's recommendations. Mrs. Wood and her associates maintained that "state control" was precisely what Canadian troops fought to prevent in the second

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1944 - 1945 (vol. XXXIX), part 5, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



world war.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of the redistribution of existing income to provide social services, Social Credit would provide in another fashion.

Instead of taking money from the people, the opposite must be done. Then the standard of living would be raised for all people to the highest level, made possible by their ability to produce goods and services and use machines to the fullest extent....By the State scientifically balancing the production with purchasing power and placing it in the hands of the people over and above their wages, the rights of the people would be met. Social Security<sup>2</sup> would become a reality and democracy in fact.

Despite the general feelings expressed by the Reconstruction Committee on Social Welfare, the history of welfare growth in Alberta from 1944 to the present has been an inexorable flow towards centralized control and direction. Separately or jointly with the federal government, the province has passed an increasing amount of social legislation.

The social welfare developments of the 1950's in Alberta include disability pensions, widow's pensions and homes for the aged. Each one is financed from the general funds of the province, and all are centrally administered. Combined with federal legislation, they give Alberta a wide

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 61.





social welfare base.

As late as 1961, the provincial government passed the Social Allowance Act, which has the most far-ranging effects of any welfare act of its kind in Alberta. This Act permits any person whose income falls below a certain level set by the provincial government to apply for provincial assistance to bring it up to at least subsistence level. The complete operation and administration of the Act is assumed by the Province. While not specifically stated, this legislation embodies the very basis of the Beveridge and Marsh reports of the early 1940's.

Though Alberta's welfare legislation since 1947 has been aided by the influx of oil revenues, this does not entirely explain the pattern of welfare developments since then. Speaking of Canada generally, which can be extended to apply to Alberta, one writer commented:

In the case of Canada, though its degree of affluence was not the major cause of the change in attitude toward welfare, it certainly enabled that change in attitude to be expressed in public policy.<sup>1</sup>

The welfare state has been described in the following terms. A state in which there are "conscious and deliberate policies for ensuring at least a minimum standard of life at all times for everyone and as far as possible equality of opportunity for everyone to achieve the best out of life commensurate with aptitude and skill."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Irving J. Goffman, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>David C. Marsh, The Future of the Welfare State, (Middlesex, 1964), p. 31.





With respect to the last twenty years, the Alberta Social Credit government has moved towards that state, perhaps in spite of itself, but nevertheless steadfastly.



## CONCLUSION

It is now possible to place in perspective the welfare developments in Alberta from 1905 to 1936 which were to result in the formation of a government department of major proportions.

Public welfare services in 1905 were far behind those of the rest of Canada, owing to Alberta's late start as a province. Before 1905, the Territorial government had neither the authority nor the funds to develop basic welfare programs or institutions. Apart from emergency situations such as the small pox epidemic of 1870, those who suffered the daily privations of the frontier were left for the most part to find individual remedies, or were forced to seek assistance from municipalities and voluntary organizations where they existed.

The provincial Liberal government in its first years of office, aside from the construction of a provincial gaol and insane asylum, played a negligible role in welfare activities. The government passed a number of municipal acts which assigned poor relief to local levels, and it was assumed that welfare responsibilities should reside there unless a specific act state otherwise.

Child welfare also reflected the Liberal government's policy to establish welfare operations at the private and local level with minimal intervention by the provincial government. The Children's Protection Act of 1909 called





for the establishment of local children's aid societies to provide the foundation for all child welfare activities in the province. Through the conscientious efforts of the first two Superintendents of Neglected and Dependent Children, R. B. Chadwick and A. M. McDonald, the societies flourished, and even without government grants performed remarkable service for the province.

The welfare structure established by the Liberal government in its first ten years of office lasted throughout the first World War, until 1919, when the Mother's Allowance Act was passed. This represented the first deliberate attempt on the part of the Liberal government to relieve local welfare costs, and directly enter the welfare field.

Yet, neither the Mother's Allowance Act, nor the change of government in 1921 signalled any change in Alberta's welfare structure. The United Farmers of Alberta government inherited a highly decentralized welfare system, and perpetuated it throughout the 1920's. The United Farmers of Alberta's rejection of the proposals for state medicine and unemployment insurance kept the United Farmers of Alberta government from increased participation in welfare, but at the same time left the province in a highly vulnerable position when the depression came in 1929.

It became obvious with the onset of the depression that municipal and voluntary organizations could not cope with the situation, and that public welfare programmes were needed on a vast scale. The Tax Inquiry Commission ordered





in 1933 by the United Farmers of Alberta confirmed the need for public welfare programmes to be financed and administered by the provincial government.

The creation of the Bureau of Relief and Public Welfare in 1936 by the Social Credit government symbolized the provincial government's intention to assume a prominent role in the co-ordination and expansion of welfare facilities throughout the province. The formation of the Bureau did not spell the end of all volunteer and local welfare efforts. It did mean, however, that the province was at last on the threshold of becoming a leading force in securing Alberta's welfare needs.



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